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ONE LOVE IN A LIFE.

BY

EMMA M. PEARSON,

AUTHOR OF

"OUR ADVENTURES IN THE WAR,"
"FROM ROME TO MENTANA,"

&c. &c.

"As the sunflower turns to her god when he sets
The same look that she gave when he rose."

MOORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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BOOK II.

SUMMER.

ONE LOVE IN A LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

A BACKWARD GLANCE.

In street and mart still plies the busy craft,
Still Beauty trims for stealthy steps the bower,
By lips as gay the Hirlas horn is quaffed,
To the dark bourne still flies as fast the hour,
As when the many drew delight from one,
And Arthur's smile was as to flowers the sun!

BULWER.

SEVEN years after! Learned men tell us that the very frames of our bodies are changed in each component atom in that space of time. We are different physically, more different than we are mentally. It is rare that an entire change takes place in our thoughts and feelings—they

are modified, or developed, but seldom utterly metamorphosed.

Now, in all lives, we come, at intervals, to some grand and supreme crisis, which stands out for ever after as a landmark on the way; the rest is made up of little every-day occurrences, which gradually mould the character into a new form.

So it was with Muriel: one great crisis came when she passed from girlhood to womanhood, and took up the burden of love and sorrow which that word implies; and seven years after came another, and to that end had all the intervening years been tending.

Link by link the chain of events had been forged, and now the time was come, and the second act in the drama of Muriel's life was to begin. But I must take you back, and tell you what happened in those seven years, before Caryl's return. Muriel's clock of life, counted not by hours, but by Caryl —so many years since she had seen him,

so many months since she had heard his name, so many days since she read it in the papers—and all the while, like the constant ticking, in between the striking of the hours, she thought of her early love.

She had grown into a handsome woman; she was twenty-four when those seven years ended; the dark eyes had gained a deeper look—they were what the French call "*les yeux voilés.*" Beneath their outward expression lurked the real one. However cheerful she seemed—however the eyes flashed brightly in some gay scene—they never smiled beneath. She had lost her shy and nervous manner, and it had been replaced by a frank, careless way, that was far more attractive. She cared very little what opinion people held of her; there were very few in whom she believed sufficiently to care, and with her keen clear-sightedness she often read a motive in sundry remarks which others failed to see. She was exceedingly amused at the

grave reproaches heaped on her particularly well-set head by sundry mothers with partnerless daughters, on the score of her unbounded flirtations. She knew very well that every man in a ball-room sought her out first, and gave her as much undivided attention as she condescended to accept, and that this very fact was called "flirtation," because other girls were obliged to be thankful for Muriel's cast-off partners. And, after all, it was their own fault if the moths singed their wings by her candle. She always warned them that she had no intention whatever of love or marriage, and it was not her fault if they were so conceited as to believe they could succeed where so many had failed.

"Such a cunning plan, dear Mrs. Langley," would one irritated matron remark to another. "Of course the gentlemen feel themselves so safe, she does not want to trap them—oh, dear, no!—and so they go on thinking it is all right, till they find

it is all wrong, and Miss Gore has the pleasure of adding another name to her list of rejected lovers. I have no doubt she keeps it written down."

"But, my dear," replied Mrs. Langley, to whom this remark was made, and who, having married off all her daughters, could afford to admire Muriel at her leisure, "it is very evident that what she tells them is true, for she does not accept or marry them."

"Wait till the right man comes, Mrs. Langley, and then you'll see."

Mrs. Langley had her own ideas as to who this right man was, and so she only said,

"When he does come, if that ever happens, I have no doubt that Miss Gore *will* marry him."

Muriel herself never thought of this; it did not seem possible that Caryl should ever return to love her. She believed that he remembered her—that sometimes the

thought of her came back in silent hours with a sort of gentle affection and regret, but nothing more. She was a woman now, loved, and admired, and sought after; but Caryl Trevor was her hero still. The heart that had awakened at the touch of love—the mind that had been developed by its power, had found employment for the energies thrown back on themselves in study. She read morning, noon, and night; every subject had its turn, and in various languages (for which she had a special genius); and the amount of information she thus acquired, aided by a powerful memory, was something marvellous. Some called her "Blue-stocking," at which she laughed.

"I am only half a one," she said. "I do not write; I shall some day; then I shall wear a pair, instead of one."

Her theology, as derived from various sources, was decidedly original, and very undecided, and had not her peculiarly

æsthetic turn of mind stepped in, she would probably have wandered off into the wildest form of indifferent dissent. But she had a detestation of white-washed walls, and snuffling, of noisy hymns and vulgar preachers. She had no sympathy with the cold "gentility," so to speak, of the parish church, which she rarely attended, preferring the Roman Catholic chapel and its kind-hearted old priest, who was a great friend of her father's, and made a tremendous pet of his clever, wayward daughter.

One mistake he made—he did not try to convert her; he was so sure that, as he said, "she must come all right some day," and she probably might have attained to that happy state, in the good old man's limited sense of the word, but that she landed herself in Ritualism, an event which, however, had not taken place when the seven years I am speaking of had ended. She had to find her own way to

the light, through a long course of darkness and doubt; for hers was no mind that could accept a faith, just because she had been born in it; and no really deep and truly religious mind ever became so by simply accepting a form of faith as presented to it by parents or teachers. They learn as they go on; they reject, they accept, they enlarge, they modify, they doubt, and then believe, and at last are obliged to be content with that form of religious belief which comes nearest to their own convictions; and, whilst they admit that it is not perfect—that no human system ever is, yet they cling to it more truly, more fondly, because more intelligently, than many a blind adherent, who has never been troubled by any doubts, and jogs quietly on in calm self-satisfaction.

Of the three girl friends, Muriel was the only one unmarried. Kate had never returned to Ropsley. Shortly after Caryl's

departure for India, she had married Lord Beauvilliers, and Alice had, for several years, been the wife of Alberic Parsons, Esq., of Lancaster Place, Hyde Park.

The Crimean war had come and gone, and the Indian Mutiny had broken out and been suppressed. One trifling incident connected with it Muriel never forgot.

She was in London with some friends in the June of 1857, and accompanied them to a large garden-party, where the lion of the day was the young Prince of Oude, the grandson of the old King, who was then in England, some said afterwards, sent there to be out of the way. There was fortune-telling going on; a gipsy had been hired, who, from under a tent of boughs, told the fate of any who chose to submit their hands for her inspection. Wealth and handsome husbands were liberally promised to all the prettiest girls, and success in love and war to the handsomest men, when the young Prince came smilingly forward, and

proffered his thin nervous hand. The gipsy took it and crossed it with the gold he offered her, then flung hand and gold from her, with a kind of shriek.

"It is all stained with blood—take it away! What are your race doing now? There is murder doing in the land you come from—English men and English women are calling in their agony for help and mercy, and you dare to be amongst their people here! Go, or, in their revenge, you too may perish!"

The Prince drew back, an ashy look on his brown face, and, with a sneer, turned away, and shortly after left the grounds.

What the gipsy read in his hand, and how she knew what was not known for many days afterwards, none could ever tell; but all present that day remembered the gipsy when the first sad tidings came.

In both these wars Caryl had borne his part; his regiment was sent from India to the Crimea, and then back again. Muriel

watched the papers from day to day; she read with beating heart the list of killed and wounded, and Caryl's name was not there. The fierce storm passed over; he was safe and well, and news of him came often to Ropsley.

And this was how it came. When Kate married, Miss Jerome looked about her for some little home in which to pass her remaining days, as she said, "in peace and quiet," and nowhere suited her so well as Ropsley-on-the-Sea. She had many friends there, it was cheap, and at times cheerful, and there accordingly she repaired; took a small house, and was as sociable and chatty a body, as ever lived and vegetated in a country town. Her society had a great attraction for Muriel. Had she not seen the last of Caryl?—had she not known him intimately all the while he was engaged to Kate?—and Miss Jerome, who pretty well guessed Muriel's thoughts, gladly encouraged her visits, and gossiped on by the

hour together about Captain Trevor and his superiority to Lord Beauvilliers.

Kate was very fond of her old governess and chaperon, and kept up a lively correspondence with her. She had twice invited Miss Jerome to visit her at Beauvilliers's Castle, and treated her with every kindness; but this pleasant intercourse had been interrupted by the whole regiment being ordered to India, and Lord Beauvilliers having to accompany it. There was no exchanging then, no staying behind on any pretence. It was dishonour even to suggest it. Besides, Beauvilliers really liked his profession—he had no inclination to settle down either in London or on his estates, and he received the order with every symptom of joy.

Kate was determined to go too—why, no one knew; and if she had a reason she kept it to herself. She persuaded Beauvilliers to let her go as far as Calcutta. She went out overland; and when Beau-

villiers and the regiment arrived (for the troop-ship was two days later than the mail-steamer), she was ready to receive them with a smiling welcome, and see them off on their way up country, with warm wishes and kind farewells. When the worst was over, and the regiment quartered in conquered Delhi, she rejoined her husband, and there, in that city of terrible memories, she met Caryl once again; and thus Miss Jerome was able, from Kate's letters, to give Muriel much information as regarded Captain Trevor.

Possibly Muriel might have preferred that Caryl and Lady Beauvilliers had not been living quite so near each other. She had a vague idea that married women could be very dangerous; she knew the strength and fidelity of her own affection, and she thought that, if Caryl had ever loved Kate, he must do so still. She had tried to picture what it would be to cease to care for Caryl—it had not fallen to her lot to be

obliged to try to do so, and she doubted if he would take it quite in the same way, and if he would think it wrong to love Kate still. A foreboding of evil was upon her, and she could not shake it off.

And what during these seven years had become of that sweet Christian, Mrs. Evans? She had vegetated on, day after day, still toadied by her poor relations, and uncontradicted by her friends; and her state of spiritual pride had gone on gradually increasing. Her contempt for the religious condition of all around had been so fostered by a course of Calvinistic reading, that she pretty well narrowed the circle of the saved to Dr. O'Rourke, herself, and a miserable man who came round preaching, and who enunciated the awful doctrine that Christ only died for the elect, and that the rest of the world had no interest in His atonement.

Alice was married, and living in London. Very few young women would have been

happy under her circumstances; but a placid temperament, and the absence of home worries, perfectly reconciled her to her position. Her life was a dull one; but so was her disposition. Mr. Parsons was absent all day in the City, and came home late, and too tired to be amusing, even if it had been in his power to be so, which it was not.

He had one virtue—an apostolic one too—hospitality; and his house was a perfect hotel for the Evans family and relations; in fact, they formed the principal part of his society. He was too proud and desirous of rising in the social scale to associate with "City people;" and the inner circle, whose doings are recorded in the *Morning Post* and the *Court Journal*, was closed to him. but this troubled Alice very little; she read all the novels Mudie could supply her with; she worked at every sort of sewing with a patent machine, and she kept the accounts, which, as she was a horribly bad arithmetician, were to her mysteries diffi-

cult to unravel and impossible to clear up, and they were the only real bone of domestic contention. How many lives have been poisoned by accounts—some because they were not kept, and some because they were, amidst tears, and difficulty, and reproaches!

Charlie was the only one of Mrs. Evans's sons who disliked visiting in Lancaster Place; he had no sympathy with Alice, her machine and her account books, and he had a profound contempt for Alberic Parsons. He had grown bitter and cynical; could he do less, in contact with his mother? He saw how, day by day, and year by year, truth and honesty and fair dealing were ignored, in the name of the Lord, and "because all things were lawful" to the elect; and as he saw how business prospered, and plans succeeded, he believed in the Psalmist, who said, "The wicked flourish as a green bay tree."

Muriel was still his darling, most faithfully loved; he had failed to guard her from sorrow, and he read too well, for his

own happiness, her undying remembrance of the man she loved; and he thought with scorn how all Mrs. Evans's plots had failed, how Caryl was free, and Herbert detested by Muriel. The day might yet come, Trevor might return, and then he should know how he had been loved, how remembered, and Muriel would be loved as she loved.

That amiable youth, Herbert, had not improved. He had a general notion of having been ill-treated by everybody, and of matters having been terribly mismanaged in the Kennedy affair. Not that he saw how things could have been mended, but, if ever anything went wrong, he always concluded that somebody was in fault—anybody except himself, of course.

He still continued to persecute Muriel, who by this time had learned to laugh at his attentions; and Charlie declared it was out of mere obstinacy, and a resolution to have his own way, for that he could not

really love her, and yet make himself into a perpetual nuisance to her.

And Dr. O'Rourke!—what of him? He was doubly popular; an arch-saint, if there be such a superior dignity amongst the canonized. Mrs. O'Rourke had gone to a better world, and he was eligible once more!

Oh! the presents that poured in!—tea-pots, coffee-pots, inkstands, rings, cambric bands of exquisite fineness, slippers of rich and sober colouring, black silk gowns of the thickest and stiffest silk; but not one single cassock—no! They bordered on Rome and Ritualism, or, as the Doctor eloquently called it, "Rome's bastard child."

"What a pity it is!" said Charlie one day, as his mother was packing up an embroidered sermon-case—"what a very great pity that Dr. O'Rourke is *not* a Ritualist. You are so limited in your choice of offerings of admiration in the evangelical world. Just think of the shades of all colour from

purest white to blushing crimson, from fresh and emerald green to dark and gloomy penitential purple! Then the chasubles, and copes and albs and chalice veils, and altar covers, to say nothing of banners and palls, and many other interesting items! Why, the dear doctor might accumulate a stock sufficient to lend to twenty churches, not so rich in millinery."

"Charles," said his mother, severely dabbing down her seal on the red wax that secured her parcel, "do you believe that Dr. O'Rourke would look at one of those things you name?"

"Possibly not; but his son is casting a sheep's eye that way. Have you not heard that Walter is keeping the Saints' days in his new living?"

"How dreadful!—to worship sinful mortals!"

"Very; I quite agree with you; but it is just as bad to worship living saints as dead ones. I am afraid those poor souls

never received in this world such a share of admiration, and such solid proofs of it, as Dr. O'Rourke."

To this Mrs. Evans vouchsafed no reply. Charlie was generally, as he expressed it, one too many for her. And thus stood matters at Ropsley, when, after seven years had passed, I ask you once more to watch my darling through her stormy trial.

CHAPTER II.

ACROSS THE SEA.

The branches cross above our eyes,
  The skies are in a net,
And what's the thing beneath the skies
  We two would most forget?
Not birth, my love, no! no!
Not death, my love, no! no!
The love once ours, but ours long hours ago.

D. G. ROSETTI.

FAR over the sea, to the land so lately convulsed by a terrible struggle, now gradually calming down. The old regiment is there, and with it Colonel St. Barbe and Lord Beauvilliers, now its Major. And there, too, in the imperial city of Delhi,—still mourning in dust and ashes,—was Kate, Lady Beauvilliers, in the full

bloom of matured beauty, the admired of all, except the men of her own regiment, and they remembered Trevor and Muriel, the pleasant, unaffected, simple girl, who had won their gallant Colonel's heart, all unawares, and who had suffered so much from Trevor's uncertain disposition.

Lady Beauvilliers was neither an ill-treated nor unhappy wife. Her husband was very proud of her, and very kind to her. But when the first triumph of success and the first burst of passionate attachment had cooled down, he betook himself to his old amusements—to his horses and dogs, to his regimental duties, and his mess dinners.

She had a splendid allowance, and she spent it royally. She loved dress, and her husband liked to see her well dressed. She always welcomed him with a smile, never cross-questioned him as to the cause of his absence, nor as to who his companions might have been. He was duly grateful,

and returned the confidence by leaving her unlimited freedom.

Was Kate happy? She had rank and wealth, youth and a buoyant temperament. To all observers it might have seemed that Lady Beauvilliers occupied a most enviable position. Yet it was not so. Kate had a heart, warped and untrained, to be sure, yet she could love—she had loved; she had sold herself for a coronet, and she had never cared for Beauvilliers. Like Muriel, she remembered.

It was strange that such a man as Caryl Trevor should have had such power over two hearts, that an unstable disposition like his, a vacillating temper and a weak character, could win such constant memory from two so different as Kate and Muriel.

When, with his regiment, he reached Delhi, he knew Kate was there. One fierce longing was in his soul—to meet her again, to see if any trace of regret and remembrance lingered amidst all her suc-

cess. They did meet before the world was twenty-four hours older, and Caryl knew that he was not forgotten. Lord Beauvilliers had no intention of behaving with any coolness to Trevor.

"Why should he?" he thought. "Had he not been the conqueror in the battle for Kate? Poor devil! it was probably very hard to lose her, but what between her jilting him, and all the fighting that had been going on, love must have been pretty well knocked out of him."

So when they met he greeted him as an old comrade, and, though the colour deepened on Caryl's bronzed cheek, he thought of Kate's low greeting the night before; he could not bar against himself the entrance to her society, and he returned Lord Beauvilliers's courtesy with equal warmth. He called on Colonel St. Barbe, and that gallant officer was not quite so effusive in his welcome.

"Sorry you are obliged to come to

Delhi, Trevor," he said. "It must be painful to you to meet Lady Beauvilliers."

"Not at all, Colonel," said Trevor, hesitatingly. "It is so long ago now since all that happened,—seven years, you know,—that really it is time all unkindness should be forgotten."

"Unkindness! yes, most certainly; but there are certain memories which we cannot always shake off. I should have thought that you were not quite free from them."

"They are not so pleasant that I should care to keep them. I wish sometimes I had never seen Ropsley."

"I wish it sometimes, too," said St. Barbe in a low voice.

"Then it was true Colonel, you did care for Miss Gore?"

"Quite true," answered the Colonel, bending his head. "That is a memory I do not wish to part with; to have loved so true and pure a creature, is an honour to any man. I only regret that I came too late."

Caryl looked down.

"There are some things about it all, that puzzle me very much, Colonel. I do not believe in any engagement to Herbert Evans, do you?"

"To Herbert Evans! No, certainly not; what makes you think so?"

"Mrs. Evans most assuredly hinted at it; but, as she is not married to him, I begin to doubt it."

"Trevor," said St. Barbe, slowly, "there was around all that Evans family, Charlie excepted, such an air of mystery and untruthfulness that I believe in foul play both to Beauvilliers and you. He would have proposed before you did at that very pic-nic, had he not been told that Kate Kennedy was only playing with him, to draw you on."

"And I was told," broke in Caryl, "that Muriel was only flirting with me to pique Herbert Evans."

"More fool you," said St. Barbe, angrily,

"to believe it. Why, man, could you not see that Miss Gore did not know what the word flirting meant? She does now, I have no doubt. Whom has she to thank for that? Acts compromise as well as words, and if ever acts spoke affection, yours did."

"I know it now," said Caryl, with a weary sigh; "but she was always too good for me, and it is too late—she must have outgrown it all."

"That, too, I doubt, Trevor. Well, we shall see; and if she does remember, don't fling away your happiness, and such a heart, a second time."

"No, Colonel, it is too late; we may be years before we return to England, and Miss Gore may be married long before then; besides, she would not dream of accepting Lady Beauvilliers' cast-off lover." And with a light laugh he turned away, evidently wishing to change the conversation.

The Colonel looked after him as he strode out of the room, and shook his head.

"Breakers a-head," he thought. "My lady would have no scruple in whistling the stray bird back to her feet; and I don't trust my friend Trevor, he is too easily led. Beauvilliers is too carelessly indifferent, and so that his wife does not openly compromise him, he cares very little as to the state of her heart, if she has one. I am mistaken if there is not mischief in the wind. I am glad Trevor is not in the regiment. If there is a sort of fellow I distrust, it is your unstable, impressionable one."

And the Colonel was right, mischief was in the wind.

Day after day, and evening after evening, Trevor passed in Kate's society. He was her escort when she rode, her partner when she danced. The world began to couple their names together, and to wonder if Lord Beauvilliers was quite blind. It is not pleasant to linger over the details of folly and weakness, but they had their effect on Muriel's after-life—they were links

in the long chain of trial that bound her for so many a year. What were Kate's motives it would be difficult to say. It does not appear that she had any, but only acting in accordance with the love she still felt for Trevor, she drifted down the tide of circumstances, and shut her eyes to possible consequences. As to local gossip, she despised it. Was she not Katherine, Baroness Beauvilliers, a Peeress of the realm. Are not we English in our secret hearts born tuft-hunters and toadies? May not a Peer do many things with impunity, that would bring a Commoner into disgrace? And if matters go so far that disgrace does ensue, is it not easily condoned? Even round the worst crime a woman can commit against society, there is thrown a halo of romance denied to more vulgar sinners; and if only the law of the land sets the erring one free, and a second marriage follows, do we not see the new name figuring in the lists of the distinguished company

entertained by this or that member of the most exclusive circle of the upper ten thousand?

Besides, Kate had no intention whatever of forfeiting her position, and she fancied that this worldly motive would be her sufficient self-guard; she did not know the terrible truth that all earthly considerations are scattered by the tempest-blast of passion,

> "Like heath that on the wilderness
> The wild wind whirls away."

There must be some stronger wall of defence in such an hour as that than merely worldly motives, and that hour comes to almost every woman once at least in her life. If those sober and staid matrons who sit in judgment on the weaknesses of their younger and frailer sisters would come into the public confessional, as penitents and converts did of old, and lay bear the secrets of their inner life, we should hear strange tales of hair-breadth escapes from

the very fate they are foretelling for these, the tried and tempted ones, of this their day of safety!

Cannot they remember this, and, for the sake of a buried past, deal more gently with them, and win them back, by loving sympathy, to the way they are forsaking? But if there had been a confessor near, Roman or Anglican, Kate would not have troubled him with any revelations of her secret soul. She paid all decent respect to the public ordinances of religion; it was the right thing to do, and did not take up much time; beyond that, she did not go. No doubts and fears had ever troubled her; and unless some thunder-bolt aroused her, she was likely to go on in the same calmly indifferent way till the end came.

The flirtation went on, and the world talked; and at last St. Barbe, like a true and good man, spoke to Caryl, as to one he had known for years, and took him to task. Trevor saw what lay before him—

that he had already compromised Kate in the world's opinion, and that it was more than probable that Beauvilliers would demand an account of his conduct.

That gentleman was absent on a hunting expedition, and Trevor determined to see Kate at once, bid her farewell, ask for leave of absence, to which he was now entitled, and sail at once for England,

"Well said, Caryl," was Colonel St. Barbe's comment on Trevor's declaration of his plans. "Do this at once, and you will spare yourself a life of bitter remorse."

Before Caryl paid his usual daily visit to Kate, all his preparations were made. His application for instant leave had been sent in, and his departure arranged. He went to his interview with Kate slowly and sadly; he loved her, yet he must leave her; his only safety lay in flight, and hers too, he knew that. She had no need to tell him so.

It was difficult to begin the subject.

Kate sat there, in her cool, white dress, looking so cheerful and so pleased to see him, that he had half resolved to put off the evil day, and not tell the news till the morrow. But chance was in his favour.

"You'll be pleased to hear, Caryl," were Kate's opening words, "that the troublesome pic-nic is arranged at last. We shall have it next week.

"I shall not be here, Kate."

"Not here! why, where are you going?"

"To England."

"To England! Impossible! I won't hear of it. What am I to do without you?"

Her tone was half defiant, half sad.

"You must learn to do without me, Kate; I dare not stay here!"

Kate's cheek paled visibly.

"Dare not? Tell me the truth, Caryl. What has happened?"

"Nothing as yet, dear; I am going that nothing may ever happen."

"I don't understand you."

"Do you not? Can you not imagine that idle tongues are at work—that for your sake I must leave you?"

"Why do you care what they say? Are we not old friends?"

"Are we not something more? I feel it, if you do not. Kate, my darling—my treasure—I must go—do not ask me to remain!"

Kate was silent.

"Remember that I love you now and always. You told me, when we parted in London, that, if ever the day came when you could claim me, you would send for me. I have not forgotten it, and the day may come yet."

"Oh! Caryl, Caryl, it must—it shall! I will be yours before I die. You do not leave me for ever; we shall meet again, and soon."

"Then you agree with me—you think it wise that I should go?"

"No, Caryl; I care nothing for idle gossip—why should you? As for Beauvilliers, he would not pay any attention to it; you need have no fear of him."

"I have none, my own; it is not for myself I fear—it is for you. Can we trust ourselves? If you can, I cannot."

Kate made no reply. She felt in this parting hour that she would have retained Caryl by her side at all costs, but she was too proud, even then, to ask him to remain.

"I shall not see you again, love, before I leave, which will be early to-morrow; it is better not, is it not?"

"Yes, if you are resolved to go."

"I am; I dare not stay. It would only be on one condition, and I will not have you pay the price you must pay. Even if you would, I will save you from yourself."

Kate burst into tears.

"You are far too good for me, Caryl. I am not capable of self-sacrifice; but go, if you will; only promise me this if ever

I come or send to you, and say, 'Caryl, I am free,' you will be mine then, will you not—mine for ever?"

There was exultation in her tones as she spoke.

"I swear it!" was Caryl's answer—"by all I hold most dear and sacred, come when you will, send when you will, you shall find me ready!"

Caryl flung his arms around her; his self-control was all but lost. Fortunately, a noise of wheels was heard, and they sprung apart as visitors were announced, and Caryl, taking her hand in his, bowed over it, as he said, in a low voice,

"Good-bye, my own; be true to me; we shall meet again;" and then, courteously greeting the new-comers, passed from the room.

It was well that Kate's pride could sustain her; her voice trembled slightly, and she looked very pale, that was all, as she plunged into a careless conversation, and

attributed her lassitude to the heat and fatigue of a ball the night before. And thus ended the intercourse, that so nearly had had its termination, in shame and sorrow, and next day Caryl left for England. He looked back on the past six months with mingled feelings, but the pleasantest recollection of all was of St. Barbe's kind, and even affectionate farewell, as he said,

"Take care of yourself, Trevor; we can't afford to lose you; there is the making of a splendid man in you yet."

CHAPTER III.

A TRUE FRIEND.

> Oh! fit and few—oh! tried and true,
> The friends that met that day!
>
> A. F. C. K.

MURIEL was paying one of her long chatty visits to Miss Jerome. The Indian mail had come in the day before, and, as usual, brought a letter from Kate. Now, generally speaking, this event caused a pleasant excitement in the placid course of Miss Jerome's life; but to-day the good lady looked grave, and seemed not inclined to communicate her news.

Muriel looked longingly at the thin, well-crossed sheets of paper lying on the

table, but Miss Jerome quietly went on knitting stripes of many colours, for what she called a sofa-rug, and began talking of a very old friend, who had come on a visit to Ropsley, and had made a long call upon her the evening before.

"Such a charming man, my dear! I knew him when he was at college—a wild lad, if ever there was one, and now such a good man—so very High-Church, though!"

"I'm so glad of it, dear Miss Jerome; anything is better than Dr. O'Rourke and Mrs. Evans."

"My dear, Mr. Vivian is so different! I only hope Mrs. Evans will not catch sight of him; she would be so horrified—a sort of a soft black hat and a loose alpaca coat."

Muriel laughed.

"And what sort of a cravat, dear Miss Jerome? Large, I hope, and with correct bow and ends?"

"That is the worst of it, Muriel. Only

just a plain band of white!—no bow and ends at all!"

"The weather is very hot, and that sort of style must be cool and pleasant. I think Mr. Vivian must be charming!—he cannot be a hypocrite. He does not want to make everybody believe that he is always thinking about preaching, and ready both in mind and costume to dash into the first vacant pulpit; besides, is he not here for a holiday? I hope he will enjoy it thoroughly, and frighten Mrs. Evans out of all her notions of clerical propriety in dress! She is always quoting St. Paul—or Paul, as she calls the Apostle. I wonder if she could prove that he wore a stiff white choker, and spoke in a measured drawl?"

"My dear, don't be irreverent!"

"Irreverence is according to our ideas, Miss Jerome. I think it irreverent to be perpetually quoting texts in common conversation, and settling the eternal welfare of all one's friends and neighbours, quite

irrespective of the possible decrees of Heaven—much more irreverent than to wear a loose coat and a wide-awake, and to enjoy a holiday."

"Thank you for your defence of my style of dress," said some one, in a manly, cheerful voice, that of itself had attracted Muriel's attention; and, turning round, she saw an elderly gentleman, who was standing at the open door of the room, and smiling pleasantly as he looked at the bright face before him.

"Mr. Vivian!" cried Miss Jerome. "Why, how did you come in, and we not hear you?"

"I came in by the door, and you were listening so intently to this young lady's theory of irreverence, that you did not notice me."

"I am sure, Mr. Vivian, that Miss Gore will be very sorry that she was not aware you were listening."

Mr. Vivian laughed.

"Miss Gore does not look sorry," he said, "nor do I quite see why she should do so. I agree with her in the general principle. What is irreverent to some minds, is not so to others."

Muriel had been quietly examining the new-comer's face. Though not actually handsome, it was very prepossessing; the clear blue eyes looked so true, the mouth curved into such a cheerful smile, the silver hair swept off so broad a forehead, and the whole expression gave such an impression of strength and gentleness, that she decided at once he was a man to be believed; besides, he had not taken up what she had said in the calmly supercilious way in which Dr. O'Rourke always did, and she waited for his next speech with pleased curiosity.

"And who is this Mrs. Evans? Is she a power in this town of Ropsley?"

"Yes," answered Muriel at once—"a power for evil."

Mr. Vivian sat down, and, in his turn, looked at Muriel. "That woman is worth knowing, and wants training," was his mental comment.

"Shall I tell you what is her power for evil?" was his public answer.

"Do you know her?" said Muriel.

"Not at all; but I know something of you already. She has done you harm, but you have let her do so—you have believed in her too much. If this Mrs. Evans were the infallible exponent of the religion she professes, you might, indeed, distrust religion for her sake, but you have entangled the two things. Doubt Mrs. Evans and her expositions, but believe that Christianity is a true thing, and not what she paints it."

This was a new idea to Muriel. She had indeed confused two things in her mind—she thought that religion made Mrs. Evans what she was, not that Mrs.

Evans had moulded religion to suit her own warped and narrow mind.

"But," she said thoughtfully, "if you teach religion in quite a different and far more pleasant way, you are not infallible; which of you two is right?"

"And you, Miss Gore, are not infallible to decide that either is wrong. It is Pilate's old puzzle over again—'What is truth?' Some day we'll talk it all over, but if I begin to preach now, you'll think me as bad as if I wore a very stiff choker, ready for the first vacant pulpit chair in dear Miss Jerome's quiet sitting-room."

"I should not mind a sermon from you," answered Muriel, simply.

"Very well, you shall have one soon; but I shall wait a little, to see what text will suit you best." And then, changing the conversation, he began to talk over all the new books and discoveries of the year, Muriel getting every moment more interested and amused, and insensibly looking

up to Mr. Vivian's opinions as very safe guides in these matters.

An hour passed, and Muriel was quite unaware that Mr. Vivian was drawing her out, till, when she rose to go, she regretted that she must leave, and answered frankly and honestly to Mr. Vivian's question,

"When shall I see you again? Soon, I hope?"

"I do hope so too."

"Then come and have a quiet cup of tea to-morrow evening, dear," said hospitable Miss Jerome. "Charlie Evans is coming; and Mr. Vivian has promised to bring his wife."

"Thank you so much. I will come, certainly, dear Miss Jerome."

Muriel was just leaving, when she remembered the Indian letter—she had actually forgotten it in the charm of Mr. Vivian's conversation.

"You have heard," she said, slowly and hesitatingly, "she is quite well, I hope?"

"Quite well, my dear"—Miss Jerome seemed embarrassed,—"and very gay. They are all at Delhi."

A strange sad look came into Muriel's eyes—she never voluntarily uttered Caryl's name, but it trembled on her lips now.

Miss Jerome replied to her unasked question,

"Yes, Captain Trevor is there—he is very well. Kate sees a good deal of him."

Muriel neither turned pale nor red, only a weary expression spread like a cloud over her face, and she left the room in silence.

"There's a story in that girl's life," said Mr. Vivian, who was watching her. "I wish I knew it. I might help her."

Then Miss Jerome told him all—Caryl's vacillation, Mrs. Evans's treason, and her fears that Kate was in danger, and Trevor too.

"I think it all very bad," was Mr. Vivian's comment; "and, begging your old pupil's pardon, I cannot understand

Captain Trevor's taste. Some men run away with the idea that they must marry a dashing sort of woman, who will tone down in married life; they cannot appreciate a young, fresh, intelligent mind that might be 'toned' up to any point. Perhaps it is because they feel in themselves no capacity for leading—they must be led."

"But, dear Mr. Vivian, if only Muriel could forget Captain Trevor! If ever you gain any influence over her, as I hope you will, you will try for that, will you not?"

"Most decidedly not. With a woman like Miss Gore, love, once born, lives on to the end. When Miss Gore ceases to love Caryl Trevor, she will cease to love at all. That is a bad state of things for any woman. Love may modify its nature—it may become a sacred remembrance, keeping the heart young and fresh and unworldly; it may rise to a higher sphere, and love human be merged in love divine. It is to that I should strive to lead her,

that I should pray for, when I asked the best of blessings for her, 'the peace the world cannot give;' but a woman without the one unspoken memory, and without love, would be a hopeless sort of creature —a world without a sun. I fancy, from what you say, that this Charlie Evans of whom you spoke knows more of Miss Gore's character and thoughts than any one else. Is it not the young man I met here last night? He told me he always walked on the beach before lunch, to smoke his cigar. I shall go there and try to meet him, and enjoy my noon-day pipe. Don't be horrified, dear friend. I confess to smoking—it is infinitely composing and conducive to thought."

"But if any of the clergy here should see you, Mr. Vivian?"

"They would envy me greatly. I shall adopt Miss Gore's line of argument, and observe that, had tobacco been discovered in the first and second centuries, I have no

doubt whatever but that the early Fathers would have smoked, and their works would not have been the worse for it."

What could Miss Jerome say? Mr. Vivian was a great man in London, and a dignitary of the Church into the bargain. The Vicar of Ropsley was nothing but a minor Canon, and therefore Mr. Vivian must be right; and she actually asked him if he had any matches, and offered him her last new box.

Charlie was on the beach, and Mr. Vivian met him. Very few people could resist the charm of manner, the personal influence, which this man possessed, and he knew it; he looked on it and valued it as a great power, given to him to use for the good of others, and Charlie was about the last person to resist it. Mr. Vivian neither drawled nor snuffled; he quoted no texts, he objected to no rational amusements; and high as was his standard of thought and act, he could fully

enter into the love of life and motion innate in every young heart. He soon learnt from Charlie all he wanted to know. Kate's possible danger affected him very little. He had formed his own opinion of her character, and that was not a very high one; and he regarded Caryl as a weak-minded man, incapable of appreciating Muriel, and totally unworthy of her; but he answered Charlie's remark to this effect:

"Very true; but you will rarely find a woman who loves her equal, or one whom she admits to be so. Some of them love their inferiors in intellect; those are women of little power of mind, who yet like to lead, and can only do it in this case. Some love their superiors; they are women of great mind, who can recognise their need of help and guidance. Miss Gore is one of those. Not that Captain Trevor is her superior. But then comes another feminine characteristic. They always elect a

monarch, and then crown him with every talent and virtue they feel he ought to possess. Miss Gore has chosen her life's hero—not wisely, perhaps. Had she met him now, she would have passed him by as very commonplace; but it is too late. Not too late, though, for both you and I to help her; and I am sure, if ever I ask you to do so, you will be ready."

"Never doubt it for a moment," was Charlie's answer. "She has been hardly dealt with, and few can judge her rightly. I have seen her eyes brighten and her cheek flush when she has been the acknowledged queen of some gay ball-room; and people called it 'love of admiration.' So it was; but I know she was thinking that she had not been, after all, so unworthy of Trevor; that he might hear how she was sought after, and that it might give him pleasure then to remember that she loved him once; for, even unconsciously to herself, yet she admits in her secret

heart that Caryl must have known that she cared for him."

"She is just the sort of person to be misunderstood. I suspect that her nature is in reality a proud and shy one, and that she has a way of showing her worst side to the world at large—first, because she cares very little for their opinion, good or bad; and next, because she dreads to show any glimpse of her inner life. She interests me very much, just because she is full of faults, the result of contrary circumstances; but I can see that she has been more 'sinned against than sinning,' and it will go on so to the end."

"My mother and Dr. O'Rourke have done her no good," answered Charlie.

"Very likely; but, as Dante says, '*Non ragionam di lor, ma guarda é passa.*' We must try to remedy the present, and guard the future, not criticise the past. I have no doubt but that both of them began in real good earnest, and if they had been let

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CHAPTER IV.

A NEW FRIEND.

Still hourly the sound goes round and round,
With a tone that ceases never,
While tears are shed for the bright days fled,
And the old friends lost for ever.

CHARLES SWAIN.

THERE was one person who much objected to the growing friendship between Muriel and Mr. Vivian, and that was Herbert Evans. Not that he was jealous of that good man, whose style of intimacy with young ladies was very different from the spiritual and unctuous flirtations of the men of Dr. O'Rourke's school; but he had an indefinite notion that Mr.

Vivian disliked him—and in that he was not far wrong.

It was utterly impossible for anyone to improve in character who was thrown into daily intercourse with Mrs. Evans. All that could be said for Charlie was that he was no worse than he had been; but Herbert had most decidedly gone off. Willie had gone altogether; he had left Ropsley, and entered a merchant's office in London, and so fortunately escaped the evil influences of home.

Was Herbert deceived as to his mother's character? Did he appreciate it at the value her poor relations put upon it? No; but he was not sufficiently high-principled to dislike and condemn it, as Charlie did, and it suited his plans to be his mother's favourite child.

He still loved Muriel, if love it could be called, which was a compound of obstinacy, admiration, and a determination to have his own way. She would suit him perfect-

ly as a wife, he thought—it would be a triumph over all who had laughed at him; and she would love him in time, love him quite enough; he did not want to be bored with an overpowering affection. So once more he summoned a committee of two, his mother and himself, and they held their sitting in the old room where Muriel's fate had been decided upon.

Mrs. Evans was a little older and a little sterner, that was all. No soft light of gentle love and faith brightened her path to old age. She was a brand plucked from the burning, and she regarded the conflagration of the rest of the inhabitants of this world with cold and heartless indifference. Her song of praise might have been embodied in those dreary words which Bulwer has put into the mouths of the Christian converts, on the night preceding the destruction of Pompeii:

"Around, about, for ever near thee,
God, our God, shall mark and hear thee!

On his car of storm he sweeps.
Bow ye heavens, and shrink ye deeps!
Woe to the proud ones who defy him!
Woe to the dreamers who deny Him!
Woe to the wicked, woe!"

Yes, woe to all, save the few elect, who should share a Heaven of her own fashioning with her—a Heaven without memory or love!

"My son," began Mrs. Evans, "you have need of my counsel?"

"Your assistance, rather. What is your opinion of this Puseyite, Mr. Vivian?"

"That he is a strangely deluded and dangerous man, who would lead astray impressionable minds, into the fatal errors of Rome."

"Exactly; now you see that Muriel is fascinated by him, can you not warn Captain Gore of the peril of such intercourse?"

"Captain Gore would care very little, provided Mr. Vivian is gentlemanly and pleasant, what his religious views might

be; he is of this world, my son."

"Then, Mrs. Gore, is she not one of your converts?"

Mrs. Evans looked up to the ceiling, as if she would say, "It is so, but I am not proud, I attribute all success to a higher source."

"I have, I believe," she replied, "some influence over her."

"Then exert it now, and get her to put an end to this friendship."

"My son, I would do much for you, but in this matter I can do nothing; besides, Muriel is impracticable—if she is separated from one friend who stands in your path, she finds another. It is as endless as Penelope's web."

Mrs. Evans so rarely quoted any profane legend that Herbert looked up surprised, and then frowned.

"You may be right, mother, but of one thing be assured, that, if Muriel is not my wife, she shall not be any other man's."

Mrs. Evans sighed; her children were no comfort to her, and Herbert was a daily trial. She blamed their evil dispositions, and never thought how much of their rebellion and want of affection she owed to the action of her own character upon them. For the sake of peace, she gave way in all things to Herbert, and this determination of his to marry Miss Gore was a burden on her mind.

In the present instance, she felt she could do nothing. Separation from Mr. Vivian was the only chance of ending his influence over Muriel, and that was easy to contrive. Mr. Vivian had a two months' holiday from London, why not send Muriel there. Alice was anxious to have her as a visitor, it only needed to write and say that doubtless at this time Muriel could come to her, and then to impress upon Mrs. Gore the wisdom and necessity of her leaving Ropsley.

Herbert eagerly fell in with the plan. A

letter was despatched to Alice, and the course of events during the next few days inclined Muriel to wish for a change from Ropsley, a wish which, unconsciously to himself, Herbert considerably fostered.

In his desire to keep Miss Gore apart from all confidential conversation with Mr. Vivian, he made himself most obnoxious, joining her whenever she walked out, and calling at Miss Jerome's whenever he discovered that she was there—a proceeding which rendered both walking and calling almost unendurable to Muriel.

"Really Mr. Herbert is growing so *very* attentive!" was Miss Jerome's remark to Muriel one day, when she had been more bored than usual by that young gentleman.

"So very disagreeable, you mean," was her answer. "I never liked him, and he is more objectionable than ever."

Perhaps she was not in the happiest of moods that day. Another Indian mail was in, and still the burden of Kate's letter was

Caryl Trevor. Muriel had no hope of ever seeing him again, yet the very thought of his being Kate's constant companion was pain to her. She grew restless and impatient, and when Alice's invitation arrived it seemed to her that it offered a chance of a change of thought, and she gladly accepted it—at all events, she should get rid of Herbert.

But before she left Ropsley a dinner-party was given in honour of a gallant old Admiral who had come on a visit to her father; and to this were invited, amongst others, Mr. Vivian and his wife, the Evans, and Miss Jerome. It fell to Charlie's lot to take Muriel down to dinner, and during the flow of conversation which usually ensues after the soup is disposed of, he said in a low tone,

"You leave for London to-morrow, do you not?"

"Yes, Charlie; it will be very pleasant to see Alice again in her own home."

"That is as may be," answered Charlie, doubtfully. "I would rather see her out of it. You will very soon find out what I mean. Not that Parsons is not the best of husbands, but he is such a pompous snob!"

"Don't use bad language, Charlie—especially about your brother-in-law."

"Very well, I'll be silent. But are you glad to go away?"

"Very. I long for a change."

"Glad to leave everybody?"

"Do you want a personal compliment? But, no, for you say you are coming to Lancaster Place. Well, then, I am sorry to leave those I may never see again."

"That means Mr. Vivian. But are you sure of that? He has a church in London. You can see him there."

"Will he be there whilst I am?"

"I think so. Muriel, he is your truest friend. I do not except myself, for he has the power to do more for your happiness

than I have. When we rejoin you upstairs, he will come and talk to you. Give him a few minutes of your time. I will take care of Herbert. You must see that he wants to prevent all conversation between you and Vivian; but leave it to me."

Muriel flushed crimson.

"He and your mother—forgive me, Charlie, but I feel it so bitterly!—have been the evil influences of my life. Not in the worldly sorrow they have worked for me, but in the wreck they have made of all my faith in religion."

"I think Mr. Vivian would tell you that the case is not a hopeless one. But you will give him the chance of a few words to-night?"

"Certainly, Charlie; tell him so by-and-by." But, as she spoke, she caught Mr. Vivian's eye, and she smiled as she did so. No further intelligence was needed, and at that moment a name caught her ear that always sent a thrill through her heart.

"Yes," the old Admiral was saying, "I knew Trevor when he was a boy—always was an undecided sort of fellow—never could make up his mind at dessert what fruit he would have, and always ended by picking out what was worst for him. His mother spoiled him. By-the-way, he'll have to come back, now his father is dead, and settle affairs. I suppose he'll sell out and marry; it is the usual thing."

A silence fell over the party. All there, the Admiral excepted, knew what had passed when Trevor was at Ropsley. Mr. Vivian looked quietly across the table, saw Muriel grow as white as the stephanotis in her hair, and resolved to turn the conversation.

"By-the-way, Admiral," he said, "talking of officers marrying, did you ever know a young nephew of mine who married when he was only a midshipman?—ran away with his wife from a ball at Rio. She was a merchant's daughter."

"You mean Jemmy Lennox—a young vagabond—ought to have been mast-headed for life!" was the Admiral's answer; and he plunged into a long discourse as to the demerits of the said Jemmy Lennox, which quite answered Mr. Vivian's purpose. Muriel shot a grateful glance at him, which, being intercepted by Herbert, made a very black look come over that young man's countenance, and caused Charlie to observe, *sotto voce*,

"Take care, dear; our friend Herbert is in one of his dark tempers to-night; we shall have a trouble with him. When you go upstairs, get away from the 'ruck' of the ladies after a while, and leave the rest to me."

Muriel nodded, and shortly after Mrs. Gore rose, and the ladies sailed out of the rooms, headed by Mrs. Evans, and arranged themselves around the drawing-room in a formidable circle. Muriel seated herself by an open window, and hoped to escape

observation; but, to her dismay, Mrs. Evans crossed the room and took a chair by her side.

"I am very glad, my dear child," she began, "that you are going to visit my Alice. It will be a great pleasure for both. Dear Alice! she regrets sometimes her home-life!"

"How very ungrateful!" replied Muriel. "I am sure she has got a kind husband. Some people are never contented."

"My dear Muriel, I did not say or imply that she was discontented; but there may be reasons into which you cannot enter. She is sadly deprived of the means of grace; her nearest church is a Puseyite one."

"She must be very glad of that. What an agreeable change for her! I wish we had one here."

"I think, Muriel," said Mrs. Evans, severely, "that you often say things out of a mere spirit of contradiction, and do things

too. I am sure that your treatment of Herbert is merely a capricious love of power. You know his devotion to you—you know your parents' wishes and mine, and you idly sport with our feelings and your own."

"Do I? I should not have thought so. I find no amusement in it. I am glad to go away, where, at all events, I shall not be subject to this daily worry;" and so saying, she rose and walked over to the piano. A song lay upon it; she had often heard it sung when Caryl was there; she took it up slowly, and the words caught her attention more than they had ever done before. It began—

"Forget me not when others fairer
Come round to tempt thee day by day—
When thoughts of me grow faint and rarer,
And I am banished far away."

It went on so, in sad, wailing words of hopeless love and changeless remembrance, of intense pleading, only for one kindly thought now and then—just one little

corner in the secret shrine—and every now and then came in the prayer,

> "Oh! then, my loved and lost, recall
> The smile that used of old to cheer thee,
> The heart that loved thee best of all."

Sometimes the simpler the words of a song are, the more they go home to the heart; it was so with these; they came, too, laden with a dream of the past, and the words rang through her heart with the sad refrain, till her eyes filled with tears.

> "The heart that loved thee best of all."

Life looked so grey and dreary to her, as she stood there, one long unbroken path of endurance. Other women might marry, their love would not be wasted, their memory not all one sad remembrance of too happy days. She stood half hidden by a curtain dividing the two rooms. Her head drooping in sad, weary thoughts. A voice broke her dream of pain.

"Not for ever," it said. "Here or hereafter the clouds will pass and the sun shine out; no love is wasted, no hope thrown

away. Muriel, they are all safe in the store-houses of Heaven."

She looked up, and met Mr. Vivian's gentle and compassionate look. He led her to a seat in the smaller drawing-room, and took one at her side.

"Forgive me," he said gently; "I cannot help feeling as if I had known you from childhood."

"You know me a great deal better than many who do," she answered.

"Well, then, you will let me come and see you in London; Mrs. Vivian will be so glad to call upon you."

"Indeed I shall be very glad to meet you both again."

"And you will come and see my church? I am very proud of it."

"Certainly I will; I should like it so much."

"I hope you will, and the services too. I believe you do not go to church here very much."

Muriel blushed.

"No, I do not."

"You prefer the Roman Catholic chapel? It is very natural; there is something in their service that appeals more to your heart—is it not so? Well, you will find just that influence in mine, I hope."

"Then you do not blame me, as everybody else does?"

"Not at all. I cannot blame you for not attending services into which you could not enter. We cannot be dragooned into religion, but what I want is to find for you a service you can like. At all events, not to speak too seriously on subjects foreign to an evening party, I can promise you good music, and hymns that will compel you to join in—ay, and to feel them, too, whether you will or not."

"I should only be too glad. I am very lonely sometimes."

"I know it; but remember, if ever you need a friend, you have one in me. You

will not be afraid to tell me all you feel, will you? I have always tried to avoid that great fault so prevalent amongst us—the forgetting that we, too, have been young. We do not trust enough to the power of sympathy."

"That's just what I feel," said Muriel. "Everybody begins where I end. They do not remember they were girls as I was, young impulsive women, as I am. They are sixty years of age, and I am to feel and behave as if I were sixty too."

Mr. Vivian laughed.

"You are, in some things, a very child, and must be borne with as such. Here comes your amiable friend, Mr. Evans. I have your address. We shall meet very soon. Let me get you some tea?"

This last sentence was all that caught Herbert's ear. It was apparently very harmless; it aroused no suspicion that Mr. Vivian and Muriel were likely ever to meet again, for he could not imagine any-

one being capable of such unselfishness as to give up three weeks of a holiday for the sake of a wilful girl, unless he were in love with her, and yet this was what Mr. Vivian was about to do. And not all for Muriel's sake. He recognized in her powers and qualities that were now dormant or wasted, and he thought of all the influence she might exert over others for good, all the example she might show to those who needed it; and he determined that before long she should take up the position she was intended for—that of a good church-woman, and a brave, hopeful, energetic friend to the sad and suffering. He looked upon her as so much valuable material utterly gone to waste, and as he drove home, after parting from her, he said to Mrs. Vivian,

"How awfully that girl has been mismanaged, my dear. I am very glad of it, though, for I shall have an opening now, which otherwise I might not have had."

"I like her very much," was Mrs.

Vivian's reply. "But do you intend to lead her on to enter a sisterhood. She would make a capital Sister of Mercy—her energy would find full vent there."

"Not the slightest vocation for it, my love—much more for becoming Mrs. Trevor. Besides, why should we shut all the good women up?—what would society be without them?—worse than it is, I am afraid."

"You are always gentle with women, dear. Really, you have a very high opinion of them in general."

"Granted, Mrs. Vivian, I have. There is nothing so bad as a bad woman, and nothing so good as a good one. We men never attain to the extremes of vice, or the sublimity of virtue, that they do, and so they want all the more taking care of; and I mean to look after Miss Gore.

CHAPTER V.

NEWS.

> Love was made to madden and plague us,
> Fresh as the flowers of the river-bed,
> Sharp as the sword that's dipt in Tagus,
> Sweet with delight and sweet with dread.
>
> MORTIMER COLLINS.

LANCASTER PLACE was, according to the opinion of Mr. Alberic Parsons, most eligibly situated. It avoided the gilded extravagance of the *nouveaux riches* of Belgravia, the faded grandeur of Bloomsburiana, and the new brick and stucco of Tyburnia. It was near the park! That seems the *ultima Thule* of all that is desirable in situation—to be near the park! There are many better streets, and

squares, and terraces, standing in fine open spaces, with good air, and a glimpse of green fields and distant hills, but then they are not near that magic ring of the enchantress, fashion—they are a mile or two from "the park."

Of what use the park is to those who have not a carriage to drive in it, and who never dream of walking in it, it would be impossible to say; but then use is nothing as compared with fashion. We all know, or ought to know, that.

Mr. Parsons's house was not a large one, and it looked internally smaller still, from the ponderous size of the furniture, which he had picked up at various auctions of bankrupt peers. In the drawing-room, for instance, was a sofa, admirably adapted for a four-post bed, if only the posts could be added; and above it a gigantic bracket, which would have well supported a marble statue of three feet high, and which threatened to descend and crush the un-

fortunate sitting beneath it; but had it not belonged to a reigning grand-duke in reduced circumstances, and therefore it must suit any room?

If Mr. Parsons could have remembered that it is not given to everyone to have a refined taste, and that therefore the grand-duke, in the first place, and himself in the second, might not be infallible in the matter of furniture, if he had confided this part of the domestic arrangements to his wife, she would probably have fitted up the house with far less expense, and much more grace, and would have spared Muriel the desperate attempt to suppress a fit of laughter, in which she dared not indulge on her first entrance into the room, as the host was present.

Mr. Parsons was studiously polite to his guest, assuring her of his pleasure in welcoming any of dear Alice's friends. He knew very little of Muriel, and she of him, but she was quite prepared to find him very

agreeable; whilst, on the contrary, most of what he had heard about her had been from Alice and Herbert, and he was not inclined thoroughly to like her. He had been told she was "satirical," and he was afraid of her. Alice only said "she was very nice," but Herbert complained of her flirtations, and declared she treated him very badly.

Now it was a great point with Mr. Parsons to propitiate Herbert, and he had settled it in his own not very wise head that, if he could have Muriel in his house for a few weeks, and after the first two or three invite Herbert up there too, he could settle the affair, and he expected a rich harvest of business from Herbert's gratitude.

Muriel had no idea of this scheme, and was prepared to enjoy herself; but she saw at once that much society there was not probable, from the size of the rooms, which rendered evening receptions impos-

sible; so her expectations must be bounded to a course of opera and theatre-going, flower-shows, water-parties, and Crystal Palace excursions. She did not know it, but at the bottom of her heart lurked a notion—a hope—that she might see Caryl somewhere. The more public places she went to, the greater chance of this. Had she not heard he was expected to come back? He might be on the way—he might even have arrived; and she entered into every plan for going out and about in a way which somewhat surprised her host, who had been told of her studious tastes and her fastidious disposition. Besides this, the domestic dissipations of the *maison Parsons* were not the most diverting.

Muriel was sincerely attached to Alice; she wished to see every good quality in her husband, and it gave her as much pain as amusement to see him in his *rôle* of host.

Eight was the largest number the dining-table could hold, so that conversation was general, and there was no hope of any blunder escaping observation; and what specially tried Muriel was the absurd way in which Alberic Parsons called the attention of his few guests to the various objects on the table.

"Just look at this wine-glass, my dear fellow," he would say—"very fine, is it not? They cost me half a guinea a glass at the Prince's sale. Taste this green *Chartreuse*—such a peculiar green! I was lucky to get it, though I paid a high price for it. One of a few bottles specially put by for the Priors,"—and so on, till Muriel wondered if he passed his time in the City hunting up curiosities, and why they were not prettier and nicer when they were found.

She began to grow tired of Mr. Parsons long before three weeks were over. His immaculate dinner costume, with a liberal

display of clean shirt, was a weariness to her; he had no ideas beyond stocks and shares, and auctions, and she felt as if it would be a relief to her if he would do something absolutely wrong to break the monotony. If he would taste too many sorts of Chartreuse some hot afternoon, and come home just a very little the better for it, with his hat on one side, and his cravat a little disarranged, and forget to dress for dinner, and propose an evening excursion somewhere, and be generally genial, she thought she would like him better; but he was so dreadfully proper, and he expected everybody to be so very proper too. Elegant vice he could tolerate, but anything that he called "not ladylike" he had no forbearance with; and Muriel had a notion that he might be a judge of china and Chartreuse, but that a lady, *pure et simple*, was a something beyond his comprehension. In fact, she knew she did not come up to his standard.

There was just a dash of Bohemianism in her nature, the remnant of her old free life on the sea-beach—just a free-and-easy way of saying what she thought, and not waiting to ascertain that it was within the prescribed rules of fashion, which she felt sure must jar on the varnished elegance of the young stockbroker.

"I think it is such a pity he was not put into the Navy when he was young," she said impulsively one day to Alice.

"Why so, dear?" was the calm reply. "You know, if he had been, he could not have married; officers are so very poor. But why do you wish it?"

Muriel remembered that it was not well to disparage a husband to a wife, and turned the question off by answering,

"Oh, because he always wears a white cravat; he would look better in a black one—and all sailors wear black."

Her real thought was how sea life rubs off false colouring, and brings out the true

man, if there is one worth bringing out.

Alice stared at such an absurd reply, and at the notion that a man's whole career was to be changed for the colour of a cravat; but she said nothing. All the going out and about had not resulted in Muriel's catching a glimpse of Caryl, for he was at that time steaming through the Bay of Biscay, in a P. and O. boat. But her faint hopes were confirmed by a letter from Miss Jerome, in which she said, after relating Kate's course of gaieties,

"Captain Trevor left Delhi for England just before Kate wrote. She says it is reported that he is going to sell out."

Those words made Lancaster Place endurable to her. There she had a chance of seeing him once more—in Ropsley none. It was not probable he would ever again go there, and, in spite of Herbert's arrival, she would not refuse to remain the original time proposed.

Mr. Vivian had returned, and he and his

wife had called. Unluckily Muriel and Alice were out, and they found the cards on their return.

Alice knew nothing of Mr. Vivian—his name had never been mentioned in her home-letters, and when Muriel prepared to return the call, she offered no objection.

Mr. Vivian was at home, and received Muriel with his own peculiarly frank and kindly manner. He asked her to spend the next Sunday with them, and go to his church, and Muriel gladly accepted. The services at St. Ninian's struck her as being something very different from anything that she had imagined an English service could be. The words were the same, but now there was a life and spirit in them that she had never recognized before, and, as she knelt there, tears swelled up in her eyes as she thought how different life might have been had she been trained in this school. To believe in Love and Mercy, rather than in stern justice—to know

that she, alien and unelect, according to Mrs. Evans, was yet sought after and cared for by the Shepherd, who went out into the wilderness "to seek and to save the lost," the "wandering and weary," was strange and sweet to her, and every better feeling of her nature was roused into action, as blossoms open to the warmth of the sunlight.

There are some natures that need hope and kindness to draw them out—distrust and harshness chill them; they grow stern and cynical, just for want of that gentle fostering which is as life to them!

Herbert arrived next day, and blamed everybody, as usual, for allowing Muriel to go to St. Ninian's.

Alice tried to excuse herself, and pleaded that really there could be no harm done. Muriel could have seen so very little of Mr. Vivian this time. Herbert was somewhat appeased, but he would have been far more discontented than ever, had he known the truth, which was that Mr. Vivian and

St. Ninian's had gained an influence over Muriel that was to last whilst life endured.

Now that Herbert was come, Alberic Parsons was puzzled as to how to carry out his vague plan of "setting things right." It is so easy to plan things at a distance—so difficult to carry them out in detail near. A dinner party was his only resource, so arranged that Herbert should sit by Muriel. Now, as he could do that every day, it did not seem a great advance; but Mr. Parsons loved dinner-giving, and always availed himself of any excuse for doing so.

It was not difficult to select the company; only four could be invited, and out of a circle of twenty acquaintances, or thereabout, the choice was soon made.

A barrister and his wife, a foreign merchant with a shadowy title, and an old gentleman reputed to be a millionaire, but who prided himself in telling about his poverty, completed the party.

Alice quickly acquiesced in all Alberic's plans. She was a model wife, and believed greatly in him. Besides, a dinner-party was a source of profit to her, for it so happened that on these very days, probably inspired by gratitude at the thought of the labours of his beloved spouse in laying out the dessert with her own fair hands, Mr. Parsons invariably purchased a present, and it always came home, and was brought up with the coffee, to the admiration of all beholders, who were thus led to expatiate on the good fortune of Alice, and the affection and generosity of her husband.

Muriel could not help saying to Alice, when Mr. Parsons departed for the City that day,

"I wonder what he will buy for you, Alice?"

"Grapes, I should hope," was the answer. "I cannot get them up here, except at such a frightful price."

"Grapes!—nonsense, dear! I mean what sort of a present for you."

Alice actually blushed.

"You say that, Muriel, because it has happened so two or three times, but I assure you it is quite accidental."

"Such a lucky accident, dear! I hope it may happen again to-day."

The dinner-party was about as agreeable as such an affair with such guests must always be. The barrister and his wife were irreproachably well got-up; but whether his ideas were all confined to the Law Courts and his chambers, or whether he had any at all, did not appear, for certainly he had none in Lancaster Place; and his wife followed suit, as a good wife should do. She should never show more talent than her lord and master—it is humiliating to the superior sex.

The titled merchant was not fluent in English, nor indeed in any language; the millionaire talked of the high prices of

everything, and said he could not afford to give dinners as he once did. He hoped Muriel would come and visit him when he had to go to the workhouse.

Herbert spoke but little, and was more bearable than usual. Mr. Parsons sang his usual monologue as to the cost, superiority, and rarity of everything about him. But suddenly the merchant absorbed Muriel's deepest interest—she had heard him say,

"Ya'as, my sir, I was on the point to come from Southanton, when I see you, my sir, in the grand cité. From Malta I am come."

"In the Peninsular and Oriental boat?" asked Muriel, hesitatingly.

"No, madame, in the *Punjab*."

"That is the P. and O. boat," remarked Herbert, who, not being in Miss Jerome's confidence, had no idea of Trevor's impending return.

The conversation changed suddenly and

accidentally, and Muriel laid a little plan to cross-question M. de Villareale when he came up into the drawing-room. The ladies soon retired there, and Muriel sat apart, turning over a photograph-book and dreaming, while the barrister's wife and Alice discussed the misdeeds of their servants. She did wish to see Caryl again. Life was so long, and to go through it without ever feeling the touch of his hand, or hearing the sound of his voice! Why was this fate laid upon her?—why must she go lonely through life? It would not be quite so lonely if they were friends—it could not be anything more—never, never, of course not; but friends they might be. Perhaps he was in London—only a few streets away! Oh! if she could have that magic telescope she had read of so long ago in the "Arabian Nights," in which, if you looked, you could see whomsoever and wherever you pleased. She leaned half out of the window, as if she would

strain her eyes, and pierce through the myriads of brick walls, till she came to that which hid him from her sight. She stayed there, listlessly watching the stars come out, and the passers-by on their way. Carriage after carriage rolled by, cabs with luggage came to and from some railway station, and on one that passed was a trunk which caught her eyes. It had a large crimson St. Andrew's cross upon it.

"Whoever that is," she thought, "he will not lose his luggage easily."

Oh, Muriel! Muriel! why look so steadily at the crimson cross? Lower your eyes, for there framed in the window is the face of Caryl Trevor! He too was looking steadily at the flowers growing in the china boxes in the ground-floor windows. He did not raise his eyes, and so it came to pass that these two did not see each other, and possibly their sleep that night was all the more untroubled for this very circumstance.

But the cab passed by on its way to the

house of an old friend where Caryl was going to stay, and the twilight closed in. The lamps were lighted, and coffee was brought up, and just afterwards a small parcel arrived, addressed to Mrs. Parsons. Muriel smiled.

"What is it, Alice? A present, I am sure."

Alice leisurely opened the covering, and disclosed one of those leather boxes which speak so forcibly of jewelry within. She opened the case, and there was a very large and handsome cameo brooch, richly set in gold.

"How splendid!" said the barrister's wife. "Really Mr. Parsons is quite princely; I wish my Anthony were half as generous!"

This speech caught the ear of Mr. Parsons as he entered, and it was balm to his soul; he took the case and showed it round, and then dilated on its cost and the fine cutting of the cameo.

M. Villareale had fallen back from the

admiring group, and was standing by the table turning over some music.

"Vat is dis?" he asked Muriel, showing a handsomely bound volume of sacred songs, one of whose frontispieces was decorated with an elaborate wreath of holly, in brilliant colours.

"That is a sort of a hymn," said Muriel slowly and distinctly, that M. Villareale might understand her. "A hymn sung at Christmas. We call it a 'carol.'"

"Carol? Ay, dare was a young man named Carol on the boat. Dat is ver odd; he gif me his card—it is here," and he pulled out his pocket-book, and began to open it.

At this instant Herbert came up.

"Muriel, I am going to sing while you play for me."

"Presently, presently," she said impatiently; and then turning to M. Villareale, "Do show me that," she said eagerly.

"*Ma si*, oh, ya-as, dear signorina, it is here," and he gave a little slip of pasteboard into her hand.

There was the name at last. Muriel riveted her eyes on it.

"*Captain Caryl Trevor,*
—— *Royal Fusiliers.*"

and written in pencil underneath,

"9, *Victoria Terrace, Regent's Park.*"

"Thank you," she said so gratefully, and with such a flash of joy in her eyes, that M. Villareale read the whole story. He was an Italian, and could well enter into the quiet and yet passionate temperament of such a woman as Muriel.

"You love him," he thought to himself. "Does he love you? He must; and yet she did not know he was in England till I gave her the card. I will see, I will see. She is too handsome and too good not to be happy. I shall tell him, they shall meet," and the good-natured foreigner put back

Muriel's hand as she was about to restore the card.

"He is perhaps a friend? I do not want him. I write down his name;" and taking out a pencil he hastily scribbled down a copy of the card.

Muriel would willingly have taken both M. Villareale's hands and kissed them, but she only looked up, such a grateful look! It was worth a hecatomb of thanks, he thought, and he smiled to himself to see his new friend hide her treasure and walk off to the piano, and to hear her dash into the accompaniment of the song Herbert had selected with a joyous spirit well suited to the words.

It was Moore's famous song in the Irish Melodies:

"No, not more welcome the fairy numbers
Of music fall on the sleeper's ear,
When, half awakened from fearful slumbers,
He thinks the full choir of heaven is near.
Then came that voice, when all forsaken
This heart long had sleeping lain,
And thought its cold pulses would never waken
To such benign blessed sounds again."

Even Herbert's stolid nature brightened up under the influence of her playing, and he gave the words with a pathetic power his hearers had not fancied he possessed. Mr. Parsons congratulated himself on the success of the party, and that all really did seem "to be coming right."

Before they broke up for the night, Mr. Parsons produced a card which had arrived by late post, inviting his wife, himself, and any friends, to a large garden-party near London, on the Wednesday of the following week, and, wishing to be civil to M. Villareale, he asked him if he too would go with them. The Italian looked from under his eyes at Muriel, and his resolution was taken.

"I will with pleasure go—I will meet you there; but I, too, have a friend. I cannot leave him—may he come?"

"Certainly," said Alberic. "It is not like a ball in-doors; the grounds are large enough for any number."

Villareale bowed his thanks, and, as he took his leave, Muriel caught his eye; there was something in it so laughing, yet so kind, that a wild hope darted through her mind, but the next moment she put it away.

"Absurd!" she thought—"he may hardly know him. Why should he bring him?" Yet she could not quite dispel it, and, in her dreams that night, she saw Caryl once more with a wreath of holly round his head, and Villareale presenting him with an unlimited number of blank cards.

CHAPTER VI.

CARYL'S RETURN.

"She is alone, unwed and yet widowed,
Sacred her youth to the love of her youth,
Wearing away in a pale mournful silence,
Vowed to her hero-love—love of her youth."

THE *Times* of next morning duly announced the names of the passengers who had arrived at Southampton in the P. and O. mail-steamer *Punjab*. Amongst those who had preferred not to land at Marseilles and hurry across France, were, of course, the Count di Villareale and Captain Caryl Trevor.

Muriel was down early to secure the invaluable sheet of printed matter which

would probably contain Caryl's name—so early that the cook was yet lighting the kitchen fire, and the housemaid cleaning up the dining-room. Muriel secured her prize, and went off to the little library, and there she sat, with the paper open before her, till sundry noises proclaimed the uprising of the family, and she withdrew to her own room, not wishing to be caught at such early studies.

Herbert was the last down to breakfast, except Miss Gore; and, as he intended going into the City with his brother-in-law, he was getting through his breakfast as fast as possible, when an exclamation from Alberic startled him.

"Look here, Herbert!—Trevor came home in the *Punjab!*"

Herbert set down his coffee-cup so suddenly that the contents splashed over the snowy table-cloth.

"The devil he did!"

"Don't swear, Herbert," said Mrs. Par-

sons, severely. "It is very wrong, and, what is just as bad, very vulgar—especially with ladies in the room."

Herbert paid not the slightest attention to this jumble of morality and etiquette, but looked sharply at Muriel. That young lady was tranquilly eating her breakfast, and, except that she looked very crimson, shewed no other sign of surprise.

"Did she know this?" thought Herbert, and then he remembered that Villareale had been in the same ship; he had been speaking confidentially, as it seemed, to Muriel, only the night before. Had he told her? If so—why? What did he know of the relations between Caryl and Muriel? It was impossible!

"Had you heard of Captain Trevor's arrival?" he asked Muriel, suddenly.

"Miss Jerome in her last letter mentioned that he had left India; at least, Lady Beauvilliers said so, therefore I am not surprised that he is come."

This evasive answer quite satisfied Herbert, but he went off to the City in what might truly be called a diabolical frame of mind; nor was the sight of Villareale, quietly smoking his cigar in Alberic Parson's private office, at all calculated to improve it.

"How you do?" said the Italian. "How the ladies?"

"Very well," replied Alberic. "By the way, you came over in the *Punjab* with an old friend of one of them."

"Did I?" answered the apparently unconscious Count. "Which was him?"

"A young officer—Captain Trevor."

The Count looked puzzled, puffed at his cigar, twirled his moustache, and rapped his nose, as if in profound thought.

"I have him," he said, at last. "I remember. Ya-as, he had ver good cigars. We smoke them."

"Did he ever speak of Miss Gore?"

"Where Miss Gore? I not know Miss Gore."

"Yes, you do," broke in Herbert. "You saw her last night."

"Oh! vraiment! ah! oui! charming Miss. No, the Captain never speak of her."

Now this was strictly true, and Herbert was obliged to be contented. He could see, he thought, that Villareale neither knew much of Trevor, nor anything of Muriel, and he could not read that individual's secret thoughts, which were by no means complimentary to his questioner.

"I can see it all, *mon beau Monsieur*," ran the current of his reflections. "It does not please you that *il Capitano* is back, it will not please you when you see him with *la bella*. I don't like you, my friend, and I like her—she is good and true. I can read it in her eyes, that look so straight at one. I shall go and see Trevor to-day, and if I can play you an ill turn I shall."

But he let no sign of anything escape him, except a profound attention to his cigar, and having artistically knocked off the white ash, plunged into business matters with Parsons, which lasted till he rose to take his leave.

"Dat is all to-day," he said. "Now I go to see your San Paolo, and your Abbey di Vestminster. I love de tombs. *Addio, au revoir*," and he sauntered out.

"That's a very odd specimen of a merchant," said Herbert, as the door closed behind him. "I can't quite make him out."

"There is nothing to make out," quoth Alberic the Sagacious. "He has no ideas beyond business, unless it is cigars. He belongs to a very old family, nearly extinct, who never distinguished themselves in any way. I have been in correspondence with him on business matters for years."

"Do you really believe he is gone to see the tombs, as he calls them?"

"Of course he is. Why not? He'll go through a course of London, and see things we English never do. By the way, I wonder who the friend is he is going to bring to Mrs. Brandon's garden-party. No Englishman, I'll be bound—he knows none. Some Italian, I daresay." And having thus decided, Mr. Parsons opened a very big book, ruled, and full of figures, and became oblivious of all other earthly things.

Meantime Villareale had not gone to the tombs. It is to be hoped the recording angel wiped out that venial falsehood, if he had any time to do so amidst the press of business he must have had in jotting down all the untruths that were told in "the City" that day.

He had chartered a cab, and by dint of showing his pocket-book, made the driver understand where he wanted to go. In due time he was deposited at the door of No. 9, Victoria Terrace, Regent's Park, and having

paid only five times more than the right amount of his fare, was fortunately rewarded for the trouble and expense by finding Trevor at home.

The young soldier was sitting in the library, looking over some papers, when Villareale entered. He rose and welcomed him in fluent and pure Italian, the language they had always spoken when alone together.

Villareale scanned Caryl with more attention than he had ever previously bestowed upon him, and, strange to say, as he did so he caught a likeness to Muriel. It was not in feature or complexion, but it was the same frank, outspoken look. Trevor had altered since he left Ropsley; he was more manly in figure and bronzed in face; his beard and moustache were thicker and more luxuriant, and the golden tinge that lighted up their rich brown colour more distinct than ever. It was Ivanhoe back from the Crusades, with all

the glamour of war and triumph around him. Muriel's old girlish hero was really a hero now.

"So glad you have found me out!" was Trevor's greeting. "I should have started off this afternoon in search of you."

"*Amico mio*, I was lonely in this big city, so I came to inflict my dulness on you; besides, I dined yesterday with my man of business, and I feel the effects of his solid style of cooking still. Heavens! how dull and pompous is that Signor Alberic Parsons!"

Caryl started. He had often heard Kate speak of Alice and her husband.

"Do you know him, Count?"

"By letters, yes, for some years; personally, only yesterday. He has a wife to match him, and a brother-in-law who is detestable, but also a friend who is charming—a Miss Gore."

This time Trevor fairly started. It was long since he had heard that name. Lady

Beauvilliers took good care to mention it but rarely.

"Miss Gore! Was it Muriel Gore?—did you hear her name?"

"Truly, yes; Muriel they called her. Strange, Trevor—you recognise her name; she recognised yours. Are you, then, old friends?"

"I do not know," said Caryl, sadly. "We were once. She was very young then."

"She is no enemy now. Trevor, there is some old story here. Will you not trust me?"

"There is nothing—that is, nothing very much. I knew Miss Gore well before I went abroad. I admired her very much; I might have asked her, young as she was, to marry me, had I not loved another. You know why I left India—because I met there a woman I had loved, who was betrothed to me, and who, guided by her worldly father's evil advice, forsook me to

marry a man who was far more rich and noble. It was this very woman who came between Miss Gore and myself. That is all. We were never anything but friends."

"Only friends? Are you sure of that, *amico mio?* She was young; you were much with her. Might she not fancy there was more than friendship there?"

"I have always blamed myself, Villareale. I did love her—not as I loved that other, but very dearly still—and I would give much to see her again, if it were only to know I had not made her life unhappy, and that we could meet as friends."

"It would be best so, Trevor; she would be happier. Last night they asked me to a party in the garden at a Signora Brandon's. I said I would go, and bring with me a friend. I thought of you, Trevor."

"Why of me?"

"I saw Miss Gore's look of joy when by chance I mentioned your name. I felt it

would be best for both to meet once more. You will go, will you not?"

"No need to doubt that, Count. Most gladly. But I shall call in Lancaster Place before that; I passed it last night."

Villareale laid his hand on Trevor's.

"Trust me, friend," he said, earnestly. "I know nothing of this England of yours, very little of any of her people, except yourself; but there are faces I trust, and faces I distrust. I trust Miss Gore; I distrust Mr. Herbert Evans."

"That scoundrel, then, is still following her?"

"Is he a scoundrel, as you call him, Trevor?"

"If he is not, he has all the capability to be so at the first temptation; he has persecuted Miss Gore for years; he seems to continue the system still."

"The effect is not great," answered the Count, "except that she detests him; yet, heavens! how she played to his singing

last night! But I knew the cause. It was those words of your poet Moore, all about the voice that came when the heart was sad and lonely, and I had just spoken of you to her."

Caryl turned away to hide the deep blush of pleasure that came over his face, but the Count's quick eye marked it.

"Yes, Trevor, you are well remembered —you have been truly regretted. Perhaps Miss Gore thinks there was some feeling of unkindness when you parted. It must be painful to her; it will be well to put that to rights."

"We parted in silence; no words were spoken that could be remembered either way."

"In silence, eh? Is that the English fashion of parting for years with a friend?"

"We were friends, certainly; and yet there had been some little misapprehension. I went too far, I acknowledge; she had every right to think I was more than

a friend; it was all a puzzle and a mistake. I should be so glad to begin again on a better footing."

Villareale looked grave.

"It strikes me, *amico mio*, that you did not know your own mind, and that much sorrow has been the result. Begin afresh, I advise you, and before you turn away from such a love as Miss Gore can—ay, and does—give you, think well if what you sacrificed it for, is worth the cost. You have told me much of your story; I think the woman you left in India must be a very angel if she could ever repay you for the loss of that heart."

Caryl frowned.

"If Miss Gore loves me as you say (which I doubt)—and I hope it is not so—I could not lose her heart."

"Very true, you could not; but she may live to love and refuse you, because she has ceased to feel that you are worth half a love like hers."

"Well, Count, all this is problematical. I trust we shall meet and be very good friends; but there are reasons why love is out of the question."

"You know your own affairs best," answered the Count. "If I were twenty years younger, I should enter the field myself, and be very thankful for your reasons; but I have lived my life, and it has been blighted by a cause that overshadows yours. I loved a married woman; I left the city where she lived, that no breath of scandal might taint her fair fame. I cast from me true affection, that might have blessed my life, and I waited till she was free."

"But she was free at last?"

"She was, but I found how worthless was the love I had so coveted. All love is worthless not given in honour. She had amused herself with me; it gratified her vanity to know I was leading a lonely life for her sake. She was free—yes, but she

married again a noble of high rank and great wealth, and I reached the city, after a hurried journey of many thousand miles, to witness the rejoicings which celebrated the event. We have never met since then —we never shall, I trust; but my long time of waiting left me an old man, so to speak, and I bitterly regret the delusion which has robbed me of years of happiness. Be warned by me, Trevor."

Caryl could not but admit in secret that, if Kate were not very much changed, it was only too probable that she would act in a similar way; but then, on the contrary, she had already gratified her ambition, and could afford the luxury of love.

The Count rose to take his leave.

"*Addio*," he said; "I shall come to you on Sunday to relieve the tristeness of that day. Meantime, dream of the *al fresco* party, and of how well you are remembered."

Caryl smiled very brightly, and the smile

lasted till long after the Count was gone, and then it clouded over. "It was treason to Kate," he thought, "and yet how pleasant it was to be so remembered!"

Where is the man, or woman either, who can resist the insinuating influence of being kindly remembered. We picture to ourselves the lonely hours in which our image has flitted before the eyes of the absent, when the echo of our words has lingered on the memory, and we like to fancy that sometimes the past has been dearer than the present. In this case the faithful memory belonged to a young and handsome woman, who might well have formed new objects of interest in some of the many who had bowed before her, but Caryl knew in his heart of hearts that neither riches nor position had ever tempted that one faithful soul to forget. He had a comfortable sense of self-complacency at being the object of such quiet, strong, unchanging affection. He pictured to himself Muriel's blush and

smile, if he were to call and present himself before her; and yet prudence held him back—it would be so marked if he were to call when he had been only four-and-twenty hours in England; it might lead Miss Gore to think that he was more than commonly anxious to renew his "friendship" with her; and really that would be a pity, for he could not forget Kate—in fact, he was pledged to her—still it would be odd if, knowing she was in London, and with Alice, at whose mother's house he had been so constant a guest, he were not to call; so he balanced between the wish to go and the reason why he should not, and the wish had just overpowered the prudence, when he recalled Villareale's warning, and that Herbert Evans was there.

He finally determined not to go, on that account, and in his own mind threw all the blame of what he admitted to himself was a disappointment, on the head of that offending youth, whom he detested according-

ly, with a renewed and intense detestation. All this insensibly brought back Caryl to the old groove. India and Lady Beauvilliers faded in the distance, and Trevor looked forward to the garden party with a delight the cause of which he did not care to scrutinize.

All that week Muriel was in a happy frame of mind, and devoted unusual attention to the composition of a dress for the fête; she even condescended to take a walk, not in the Park, but on a shopping excursion with Herbert, and was so chatty and agreeable that her companion fancied he was at last making way, and resolved once more to put his fate to the test, in the quiet shades of Mrs. Brandon's garden. To this effect he wrote home, adding, quite indifferently, that Trevor either was still in town, or had passed through it, on his way to his home, but that they had seen nothing of him, and that Muriel seemed not at all disappointed, and

certainly did not pine after him now.

Mrs. Evans read out this letter in great triumph to Charlie, who did not draw quite the same deductions from it. He knew Muriel so well that he was aware that the very fact of Caryl being in England, and not with Kate, would be quite enough to put Muriel into good spirits; that she had never had any hope from the day when he had first proposed to Miss Kennedy; that, judging him by her own steadfastness, she believed that his affection for Kate must be as changeless as her own for him, and that her marriage could not affect it. It was very wrong, no doubt—he ought not to love Kate now; but then if he never told her of it, or showed it in any way, it could not do any harm, so she argued; and Charlie knew it, but he knew, too, her longing to see him once more, and how the faint hope that it might soon be so, now that the seas were no longer between them, was quite enough to make her very happy.

Impatient in all other things, she was so patient in love, so little contented her.

"What do you think of that?" asked Mrs. Evans, triumphantly.

"Of what, mother?"

"Of Herbert's news?"

"Of Herbert's news? Nothing very much. I think Muriel is enjoying the change, and is in very good spirits, and that Trevor is probably unaware that she is in London."

"Charles, you are very unamiable; you do not share your brother's joy. Are we not told to rejoice with those who do rejoice, and weep with those who weep?"

"When Herbert deserves such a demonstration on my part, he shall have it; meantime, life has too many stern realities to leave time for rejoicing or weeping on every occasion."

"My son, your heart is indeed hardened; every gentle and holy influence is lost upon you."

"That I deny, mother; there are none

here; this is an atmosphere of frost, with a promised future of fire and torment—do you call these soft and holy influences? I do not often speak on such subjects to you—we never agree upon them. Keep your peculiar doctrines to yourself—leave me to mine."

"Reprobate," murmured Mrs. Evans; "how thankful I am that your blessed father has left me the power to distinguish between the good and the bad, the power to prevent the wealth he accumulated from falling into the hands of mockers or unbelievers."

Charlie looked sternly at her.

"The less you say on that point the better. Where was my father when he signed that will? Separated from all his old friends—hidden, as it were, from them, that they might not see his state; and what was that state? Did he know what he was signing?"

"It was read over to him," faltered Mrs. Evans.

"Did he know it from the leading article in the *Times*, had that been read to him? I doubt it. Mother, beware; you may yet be forced to do us justice, if you attempt to wrong any one of us by a partial distribution of the wealth which you possess—how you possess it, has not yet been questioned—it may never be; it may rest for ever between your God and yourself; only I warn you to act fairly and justly, and to refrain from threats, which I should take care to render powerless." And so saying, he walked out of the room.

Mrs. Evans did not faint or go into hysterics, for the very good reason that there was no one near to see and pity her; but she wrote off a long epistle to Dr. O'Rourke, who, though he objected to the confessional as Romish, had no objection to act as confessor to his female penitents, and in due time she received his answer. He was perfectly aware of the state of affairs. Indeed, he had, before Mr. Evans's death, suggest-

ed how well it would be that power should be left left in her hands, and he saw the danger of irritating Charlie. Philip and James were at a distance, and knew little or nothing of the circumstances under which the will had been signed; they had ceased, as far as any social intercourse went, to form part of the family. Herbert was a consenting party; Willie perfectly indifferent on the point, having lately had an independent fortune left him by a distant relative. Alice was simply a nonentity. Charlie was the only one to be feared, therefore he counselled forbearance, and even friendliness, and ended by advising Mrs. Evans to avoid all allusion to religion when speaking to Charlie, "as it was only throwing her pearls before swine."

Mrs. Evans, much against the grain, fell in with his views, and the swine in question went on his way more undisturbed than usual, and much rejoiced that his last explosion had, like a thunderstorm, cleared

the air. The circumstances were thus peculiarly favourable to his mentioning that, in the course of a week or two, he proposed to take a holiday, and a walking tour in Wales.

This was his public plan; but he had another, and that was to see Trevor himself, and find out, as he expressed it, how the land lay. He had very little doubt in his own mind that Trevor knew Muriel was still in town; and, further, that it was more than probable they would meet. He might be of use in the matter. He knew Caryl's club, his address could be found there, and one half-hour with him would settle the question, in Charlie's mind, why Trevor had left India, and what were his relations with Lady Beauvilliers, whether Muriel was still anything to him, and whether he was at last resolved to act as a true man should, who must feel he had been wrong, and that it was still in his power to atone for his error.

Mrs. Evans graciously consented to the proposed holiday, and even presented Charlie with a twenty-pound note for his expenses.

"Go and enjoy yourself," she said, graciously; "and do not omit to go and see Alice on your way."

Charlie promised to do so, if he had time; and the young deceiver set to work at business accounts with redoubled vigour, that no delay might occur in his starting.

Certainly "the stars in their courses" fought against Herbert. Trevor there, and Charlie coming! Fortunately he remained in ignorance of these two circumstances, and a reign of unusual harmony and liveliness set in at Lancaster Place.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MEETING BY THE RIVER.

And have you forgotten me quite, dear?
Or say, do you sometimes dream
What life might have been if we wandered still
Together by wood or stream?
Do you think of the days when my love was all
The world could give or take,
And say with a sigh they were happy days,
Just for the old love's sake?
Just for the old love's sake, sweetheart,
Just for the old love's sake?

REA.

THERE is nothing more delightful than a garden-party, when the weather is propitious. Too often in our uncertain climate rain and wind set in, just in time to spoil all, and to send the disappointed pleasure-seekers home in the

misery of wet boots and draggled finery. But a garden-party has one advantage over a picnic—there is always a house close by—generally a good one, and the guests are saved from the worst results of a downpour; yet, for all this, many an anxious look was turned up at the skies on the morning of Mrs. Brandon's fête.

This lady was a widow, well born and well dowered, perfectly aware of the advantages of her position, and by no means inclined to relinquish her despotic monarchy in favour of any man, however worthy of her attention.

"My dear Lady Eaglescliffe," she used to say to another equally fortunate woman, but who inclined too willing an ear, to the advances of sundry noble, but penniless individuals—"my dear Lady Eaglescliffe, be persuaded by me, never take unto yourself a master. The age of romance is over with us, if it ever existed in our young days. It is probable that love was then

the lord of all, and we took his yoke upon us, and in emerging from the discipline of the school-room, and the trammels of home, we obtained comparative freedom, but now, what can we need more? Have we not the power to go where we will, and do what we please, unquestioned and unchallenged?—to expend our incomes as suits us best? What should we gain by having to pay the annual expenses of some fine gentleman, and being obliged to go and come at his beck and call? As for talking of the loneliness of old age, that is a mere piece of sentiment. We have the power to assemble around us old friends, and to cultivate new ones; and when they pass away—if indeed we have the sorrow of surviving all our contemporaries—we may (if we have done wisely and well towards them) find in their children, the rising generation, all the consolation we shall need on our way to the better land, where we may humbly trust to

find again all we have loved and lost."

Lady Eaglescliffe was but half persuaded, but she had not the buoyant, genial disposition of Mrs. Brandon, and her popularity did not equal that of her friend. With such a temperament, a most hospitable turn of mind, and an active sympathy in every love-affair that came up, it may be imagined that Mrs. Brandon's garden-parties were an embodied reminiscence of Eden. She had exceptional luck, too, in the weather. The Queen herself was not more fortunate, and her pretty grounds, sloping down to the river, looked their best in the July sunshine.

Everybody who was invited came on these occasions, and everybody brought their friends. It was what some superb leader of fashion might have called, in lofty scorn, "a very mixed affair," but what all, except such lofty and fastidious individuals, termed, in the slang of the day, "awfully jolly!"

Between the deceased Mr. Brandon and Alberic Parsons some considerable amount of intimacy had existed, and thus it came to pass that his name was retained on the visiting-book of his wife, and remained there in the list of those to be remembered at general gatherings.

Doubtless there were many who rose up on that morning with very pleasant anticipations of the coming day, but certainly there were two who would not, for very much that could have been offered them, have been excluded from that fête. And these two were Caryl and Muriel. He looked forward to the meeting as a means of placing the past in a different light, and doing away with any feeling of coldness and estrangement. Was that all? No, there was still the lurking thought of how faithfully he had been remembered through all, and how pleasant it would be to have her once more by his side. And Muriel? She had but one idea, the longing to see

him again, and she could not but indulge the hope, improbable as it seemed, that he would be there that day.

When the ladies came down ready costumed, Alberic Parsons condescended to express his high approval of them. Alice wore a rich silk, of a delicate hue of lilac, trimmed with lace, and looked the young matron to perfection. Muriel was dressed in pale blue, of some indescribable material, with a bonnet of the same hue, and stephanotis in it. It was a bonnet, then, not a thing perched on the top of the head, supported by a cushion of horsehair behind, and leaving the face fully exposed, the whole effect being that the head and its belongings are very much too large for the body it belongs to. She had never looked so well. An anxious, tender look was in the dark eyes, the short upper lip curved with a gentle quivering, and the proud nostrils expanded like those of an Arab horse, with the quiver of waiting expectation.

Herbert looked at her in wonder. What was she thinking of? She had been so gay, so gracious, that he felt sure all was going well. It was such a change from her usual way, and he was all the more puzzled as to the cause of this strange, shy joyousness. She was the Muriel of seven years ago, girlish and trusting, thinking nothing of her handsome face and her great talents, but only imagining she was not worth the love of any man, not worth half the love of Caryl Trevor.

Herbert was about the last man to comprehend the changeless disposition that could go back from the present, and in some way be all that it was in the past. He could not understand it, and he decided that it was nothing after all, unless it were that she had come to her senses at last, and was looking forward to a declaration of his affection for her.

Mr. Parsons was delighted with his wife, Herbert with Muriel, and in this happy

frame of mind they started for Mrs. Brandon's fête.

Alberic considered it "not the right thing" to be punctual, so the gardens were well-filled when they arrived. Mrs. Brandon was honestly pleased to welcome two such very good-looking women as Alice and Muriel, and instantly summoned to her side two of her attendant cavaliers, and bade them show the conservatories and the American shrubs to her fair guests.

The gentleman to whose lot it fell to escort Muriel, was a young "scion of nobility," perfectly well-bred, but uncommonly stupid. Nothing could have suited Muriel better. He was very good-natured, and quite willing to obey her behests, which were to inspect every place where any of the company were assembled. The Honourable Adrian Leslie was agreeable to this. He was in search of a rich American heiress, and it fell in with his ideas "to prowl," as he called it, everywhere.

"Shall we go down to the river, Miss Gore?" he said. "Mrs. Brandon declares we are not to go upon it till after lunch; but it is very pretty under the trees. You won't care to go rowing yet, will you?"

"Not at all," answered Muriel, cheerfully; "we should not see anybody upon the river. I like to see all the newcomers—don't you?"

"Most sensible girl!" thought the Honourable Adrian; "does not want to spoon in shady walks." "Yes, Miss Gore," he added, aloud, "you are quite right. Suppose we just look at the terrace walk by the river, and then go towards the house."

Muriel assented; but no satisfaction resulted to either from their search, and when they returned to the house, Herbert claimed Muriel to take her in to lunch. The Honourable Adrian departed on a fresh search as unsuccessful as the first.

The lunch was a splendid one—but Muriel cared little for it. Her eyes

wandered perpetually to the door. Where was Villareale? When lunch ended, Herbert offered his arm and led her out on the lawn.

"Will you go for a row, Muriel?" he said. "We should be alone then, and I have something I must tell you to-night."

"What about?" cried Muriel, unconsciously.

Before the answer could be given, Villareale stood before them.

"Ah! Miss Gore!" he said. "I seek you—dat is M. Herbert; his sister want him. Go, M. Herbert; I stay here with Mademoiselle till you return."

It was so carelessly and easily said that Herbert was deceived, and saying—"I shall not be long—wait here for me," went off to find his sister.

"You speak Italian?" asked the Count.

"A little," replied Muriel; "but I can understand all you say."

"That is well," answered Villareale, re-

lapsing into his native language. "We will not wait here—come to the river. I have a friend here; I wish to present him to you. M. Herbert has had enough of your society every day; you will give me some of it now—will you?"

"Very gladly, M. Villareale;" and they went towards the river.

It was a long terrace walk, shaded by trees, with steps going down to the water, deserted now, for twilight was closing, and the rooms were lighted for dancing. Muriel could not speak, and Villareale knew it. He led her quickly on, till, just at the head of the steps, they saw a man leaning against the parapet.

Muriel's heart leapt up with a fierce beat of joy. Yes, there was the face she had so longed to see—one moment more, and she should hear the voice she had prayed with blinding tears to hear once more. She grew breathless and faint, and leaned heavily on the Count's arm.

"Is it—— But I know it is!" were her impulsive words; and Caryl came forward.

"Miss Gore, I am so glad to see you again!"

"And I to see you," was the simple answer.

The Count stood by smiling; he caught one grateful look from Muriel, the memory of which lingered many and many a long day.

"*Eh bien*," he said, "shall we row on the river? It is pleasant there. Miss Gore, do you want to dance? I am at your service. But no, you prefer the coolness and quiet of the water. Here is the boat; let us go."

"Will you come?" said Trevor to Miss Gore.

"I should like it."

Muriel forgot all proprieties, as regarded chaperons and other etiquettes of society. But, then, who remembers them at a garden-party?

So the boat was unmoored, and Caryl, stepping in, took the oars. The Count handed in Muriel, and was just about to follow, when he struck his forehead dramatically.

"*Dio mio!* what a forgetful fellow I am! Thou rememberest, Trevor, how our hostess asked me to dance with that red-haired girl, and I rashly promised. I must go to fulfil that promise. I return in half an hour; pardon me till then." And he vanished.

They were alone at last, utterly alone, and Caryl gazed earnestly at his companion. The unformed girl was a handsome woman now; he could believe all he had heard of her conquests, and yet he could believe, too, as he saw how she trembled and her lip quivered, in her faithful remembrance. What could he say? He dipped his oars in the water and pulled out from the bank, and then resting on them, said,

"I knew you were to be here to-day;

we came late because I wished to see you first. Miss Gore—Muriel, tell me that if I have caused you sorrow you forgive me—that we are really friends once more."

"Indeed, indeed we are. I was very young, and I daresay very foolish; but I did not blame you, Captain Trevor, indeed I did not."

"Say Caryl."

The old, old words again, and Muriel, as ever, listened and complied.

"Caryl," she said, and blushed, "I am very glad that, if there was coldness and estrangement, it is all over."

"There never was, in reality, Muriel; we parted friends, we meet as such. Let me hold your hand, dear—let me know by its soft, firm clasp that all is well with us now."

Caryl was getting on at a rapid rate, it must be confessed; but Muriel looked so superb in the moonlight that he could not resist the old charm. She gave him her

hand in all honest simplicity. "It is all well," she said. "I thank God we have met once more!"

And they talked of the past and the present, but the name of Lady Beauvilliers was never mentioned between them; and that was truly a halcyon half-hour.

The boat had remained pretty much in the same spot from which it had started, and thus it was no matter of surprise that the Count, coming to the water-side, should catch sight of his two young friends, and that his voice should be perfectly heard by them.

"Come on shore, friends," he cried. "I have danced with my red-haired miss, and you must show yourselves in the ball-room."

"Is that you, Count?" answered Caryl. "I thought we were much further away. Really, I do not know how far we went, but here we are."

"No, I do not know how far you went,"

said the Count, sententiously; "but there you are. Come on shore, and let us join the dance. *Vive la danse!* I feel quite young again to-night."

They landed, Muriel walking as if in a dream.

"You will dance with me, will you not?" said Caryl.

"I don't care to dance to-night, but I will, if you wish it."

"I do—you know that."

They entered the room where the dancing was going on, by the windows which opened to the lawn, and the first person they met was Herbert. The sudden surprise at seeing Caryl overpowered him at first, but it was only for a moment, and then his face darkened with its old scowl.

"Where have you been?" he said abruptly to Muriel. "What do you mean by leaving Alice all this time?"

Trevor looked at him, and his blue eyes

flashed fire. If there was one thing he disliked, it was being in any way crossed or ignored.

"Mr. Evans," he said sternly, "Miss Gore has been with the Count and myself. After so long an absence, we had much to talk over."

"Oh! that is it, is it?" was Herbert's not very courteous rejoinder. "So you are the Count's friend?"

"He is," broke in the Count, who had listened in amaze to Herbert's sullen greeting—"and why for no?"

"No reason that I know of," answered Herbert; "but now I shall take Miss Gore to her friend and chaperon."

"You will do nothing of the kind," said Muriel, her high spirit rising at Herbert's insolent tone. "I am going with Captain Trevor to find Alice, and then I am going to dance with him."

It was a bold defiance, and Herbert took it as such.

"Very well, Miss Gore; we shall see how all this ends."

The Count fairly laughed.

"We shall see, M. Evans?—we shall see Madame Parsons meet her old friend—*et après*, we shall see Mademoiselle Gore and M. Trevor valse together. Come, find a young lady; I shall do the same."

Herbert turned away, grinding an oath through his teeth, and Trevor walked away with Muriel. They found Mrs. Parsons, with her husband acting as cavalier; they had very few acquaintances in the gay assemblage, so they enjoyed each other's society, "alone amidst a crowd."

Alberic had never seen Trevor, but his wife darted forward, and held out her hand to him.

"I am so glad to see you! When did you come back?"

"About a week ago. May I come and see you?"

"To be sure you may. But let me in-

troduce my husband to you, Captain Trevor. Alberic, you have often heard of him?"

Of course Mr. Parsons had, but, very stupidly, at the moment he forgot that Trevor had anything to do with Muriel, and only seeing a very handsome, soldier-like man before him, he warmly seconded his wife's invitation, and, as at that moment the band struck up a quadrille, he proposed that Muriel should dance with him, and that Trevor and his wife should be their *vis-à-vis*.

"Delighted!" said Caryl, "if Miss Gore will promise me the valse."

Miss Gore assented, and Alberic, thinking he had done a very clever thing in making so agreeable a party for the dance, was somewhat surprised when, having taken his place, Herbert came up and remarked, in a low tone,

"What a fool you are!"

"Why?—what have I done?" asked the

unconscious Alberic; but, as the exigencies of the dance demanded at that moment his presence on the other side of the room, the question went unanswered.

The quadrille was over, and the valse too, and yet Caryl lingered by Muriel's side. The old spell was over him, and no Kate there to break it. Herbert's evident jealousy and displeasure only added to the pleasure he felt in Muriel's decided preference.

"Unlicked cub!" he thought, "I shall have to teach him a lesson soon, I expect; well, he shall have it hot and heavy."

The cub, meanwhile, lounged about in an evil frame of mind. He had sense enough to see on what a sand his hopes had been built, but with his old obstinacy he was determined that, even if he could not win Muriel, Trevor never should, and he cast about him for means to prevent it; yet none presented themselves, and the prospect looked very dark.

In this mood he was leaning against one of the open windows, when the Count's voice struck his ear.

"Yes," it said, "he is very what you call handsome, and good too, is he not? You see what he has done."

Herbert looked at the Count's companion; it was the red-haired girl he had spoken of to Muriel and Caryl, and he was pointing out to her the young couple now again valsing round the room.

"He has told her something of Trevor," thought Herbert. "What is it? I will know, it may be useful," and stepping forward, he touched the Count's arm.

"Introduce me, will you?"

"Oh, ya-as," answered Villareale, "I will do so. Miss Keyr," so he pronounced Kerr, "dis is M. Evans."

Herbert bowed.

"May I take you to have some refreshment?"

The red-haired girl smiled assent, and

they went off together, leaving Villareale to the quiet enjoyment of a surreptitious cigar in the shrubbery.

"Very pleasant man the Count," observed Herbert, as he helped his companion to some lobster mayonnaise, and a foaming glass of champagne.

"Oh, charming, speaks such good English for a foreigner."

"Very, and this is his first visit to England; he came over in the same ship with Captain Trevor. Do you know Captain Trevor?"

"Oh no! I wish I did; how charming he must be!"

Everything was charming with Miss Kerr, who was further remarkable for never having an idea of her own, and adopting those of everybody she talked with in turn.

"Why so charming, Miss Kerr?" said Herbert.

"Oh, I don't know; don't you think so? He is so handsome and so good."

"I don't think much of his beauty," replied Herbert, replenishing her glass (champagne has a wonderful influence in loosening women's tongues), "and I don't know in what his special goodness consists."

"Oh! don't you? But the Count says he met a lady in India whom he was attached to—oh! so much attached to—and he left, so that there might be no scandal."

"Perhaps he was afraid of her husband, if she was married."

"Of course she was; how stupid of me not to say so! Oh, dear no! the husband was charming; he never saw anything, it could not be that."

"Perhaps the lady did not like it, and ordered him off!"

"Wrong again," said Miss Kerr, trying to look arch. "It was all his doing. She

liked it, and he left. So charming, was it not?"

"Then perhaps he did not really care about her?"

"Oh, but I should say he did, and it grieved them both very much. So romantic, is it not? And the Count says he is so glad to see him paying Miss Gore so much attention, it will quite cure him."

"The Count was confidential."

Miss Kerr got up a little blush.

"Oh, yes, so charming. I speak Italian, that was it."

"That was not it," thought Herbert. "It was the iced champagne; but I know enough now, so it matters little what it was."

He took Miss Kerr to the ball-room, he even danced a quadrille, he felt so grateful for a clue as to what his course must be, and then went out into the moonlight on the lawn, and throwing himself on a bench, lighted a cigar, and smoked and

thought till he rose with a nasty smile on his face.

"It may be nothing," he thought, "only that they meet as old friends amongst strangers; but he will come to Lancaster Place. I will watch, and, if there is anything more serious than Trevor's old flirting style, I shall know what to do. Kate Beauvilliers, you are strangely changed if you will let a victim escape your hands; and one word of this love for Muriel, if love it is, would rouse all your passionate, reckless nature. I have but to give you a hint of what is going on, and I may leave the rest in safety to you."

He rejoined his party, and found the Count and Trevor handing the ladies to the carriage. The last good nights were said, and they were on their way to London.

"How Captain Trevor is improved!" remarked Mrs. Parsons.

"Is he?" said her husband. "I find

him a very well-bred, agreeable man."

"I am so glad you like him," said Muriel simply.

"I forgot, till Alice told me," answered Alberic, "that you were old friends. I have asked him and the Count to dinner the day after to-morrow; we can talk over the party."

"So much the better," was Herbert's thought "The more they see of each other, the sooner I shall know the real state of the case; but he only said,

"Is not Trevor going down to his place?"

Alice answered the question.

"Not for a week or two: he says he has been away from England so long, he must see a little of London."

"And the people in it, I suspect," laughed Mr. Parsons, who was in the best of tempers, and had quite forgotten and forgiven having been called a fool. It must be confessed that, if he was one (and

he looked very like it), he was a very good-natured one.

Muriel smiled.

"It is pleasant to meet old friends," she said.

"He seems resolved to enjoy himself," remarked Alice; "to go everywhere, and see everything, he is so delighted to be in England once more."

"I wonder Lady Beauvilliers can spare him," said Herbert in a low voice to Muriel.

That name sent a shudder through her, but she fought it down.

"Lady Beauvilliers," she said steadily, "can have nothing to do with Captain Trevor's movements now."

Herbert laughed sarcastically, but answered nothing; and for the rest of the drive home Muriel was silent and depressed.

If you want to make anyone uncomfortable—to damp their joy, and throw a

shadow over their pleasant anticipations—you have only to laugh sarcastically and say nothing!

CHAPTER VIII.

WELCOME GUESTS.

The wind had brought a chill on the earth,
The tide rolled back to the sea,
The stars had set, and shadows fell
O'er woodland, hill and lea,
But she sang as morning beamed in her heart,
My love returns to me!

E. B. A.

THERE was sunshine for the next few days. Herbert, having resolved to see all that was going on, and what it really meant, as soon as possible, controlled his temper, and made no objectionable remarks, even on being told, on the day after the fête, when he came back from the city to dinner, that the Count and Captain Trevor had called, and had escorted the

ladies to leave their cards on Mrs. Brandon. Alberic Parsons, being in ignorance of Herbert's state of mind, was pleased at the prospect of two such pleasant acquaintances for the rest of the London season, and his wife took good care not to enlighten him.

When Alberic had first known Alice, Trevor was engaged to Kate; he heard of her having jilted him, as they called it, and of Trevor sailing for India. It was thus for him a thing of the past; and no one had ever entered into any particulars as to the events which had preceded the engagement; he only knew that Herbert had determined to marry Muriel. He saw that Muriel did not care for Herbert; but as he was not particularly fond of that young lady, he troubled himself very little as to her feelings about this love scheme.

Alice, who valued Herbert at his true worth, or rather worthlessness, though

for her husband's sake she dare not openly oppose him, had every sympathy with Muriel's love for Trevor. She knew how falsely Miss Gore had been treated by her mother, how much of sorrow that treason had worked, and she would have secretly rejoiced at the downfall of any of Mrs. Evans's plots and plans, so that she was quite prepared to make Lancaster Place very pleasant to the returned wanderer.

As for Muriel, she was living in a dream. She was content to be once more with Caryl, and did not look forward to the future—the present was enough for her; but she went to call on Mr. Vivian, and no sooner did that acute observer catch a glimpse of her than he saw the change in the expression of her countenance, the bright flash in the eyes, and the smile curling round the lips, and he said, as he advanced to welcome her,

"Very glad to see you, Miss Gore—all

the more because I am sure there is some reason for wishing you joy."

"I came to tell you and Mrs. Vivian," said Muriel, "but I hear she is out. I am sure you will be glad to hear that Captain Trevor is back in England."

"I am really very glad, my dear. You have seen him, then?"

"Oh! yes; and we are all friends again."

"Why, you never quarrelled, did you?"

"No; but after all that"—she hesitated—"that I told you about, there was a sort of estrangement, it was quite different."

"And now the estrangement is over? I do congratulate you—you must be very happy."

"I am indeed. It is quite enough to see him again—I don't ask any more."

"Muriel, my child, you may fairly ask Him who has already given you so much of blessing, to give you more. All happiness is in His gift, and you may just as

properly ask Him to give you that one particular portion of it you desire as you might ask it of your earthly father."

"Yet some people say we should not pray about such things."

"Some people make the Almighty a vague abstraction. Yet they read that He counts every hair of our heads, and notes the fall of every sparrow, and that we are of much more value to Him than many sparrows. Ah! Muriel, our hearts are far more to Him than the hairs of our head—their joy and sorrow are all marked by Him. He only knows how these affect for good or evil our moral character, even our religious feelings, and what may be the influence of happiness or trial on our future and eternal lot. My dear child, He counts every sigh, He marks every smile—they are matters of the deepest interest to Him. Go then, and thank Him for this joy, take it from His hand, ready to give it back if He demands it, and ask Him too

if He sees fit to deepen that joy, and lead it on to the pure perfection of human love, a happy marriage."

Muriel coloured.

"I have not thought about that now," she said.

"Well, go on from day to day, trusting in His guiding hand. Don't be afraid to be happy—it will do you good. Do you remember I once told you I would preach you a sermon when I knew what text would suit you. You see, I have begun to-day, and the text is Love, human love, purified, constant, unselfish, leading up to Love, Divine, eternal, and intense. It is the mainspring of your character—it will bless or ban. I don't think sorrow suits you—it has with you a hardening effect. Of course I know it ought not to be so. You ought to be resigned and submissive. But we must deal with facts as we find them; and sorrow does make you cold and reckless, so on every ground I shall pray

that you may have great happiness. I don't say you will. There's a fight going on between Heaven and Hell for you, and for all of us, and the devil may work out for you grief and trial, to alienate you from God."

"But then God is all-powerful. He can give me joy, as it is so good for me!"

"He is all powerful. He will conquer in the end. Meantime, we are told that Satan is the prince of this world, and he certainly has infinite power of working evil. It is a great mystery. We must trust and pray. Meantime go and enjoy yourself, and do not smother either your love or your happiness, and be sure to tell me how all goes on."

"I shall be only too thankful to do so. I went to the early service at your church the morning after the fête, when I met Caryl—Captain Trevor, I mean—but I did not see you there."

"I was not there yesterday morning;

but that is just what I told you—not that I was absent—I mean that you went because you were happy and grateful. I hope and trust that you will have still greater cause to be so. God bless you, Muriel, and give you a happy life here, and a far happier one hereafter!"

They stood silent for a few moments, and then Muriel took her leave, feeling all the safer, and stronger, and better, for the human sympathy that could enter so perfectly into her feelings. It showed her what Divine sympathy could be, if that of man could be so strong and wise. She felt a sense of trust in her heart that had never risen there before.

Another pleasant surprise awaited her return home. There sat Charlie, ready to welcome her, ready to enter into every plan, to share every hope and fear. Muriel always had a feeling of safety when Charlie was near, and she sprang forward in most thorough delight to meet his outstretched hand.

"Charlie!—you here? How delightful!"

"Now, that's what I call pleasant!" said Charlie. "Here I come, unannounced, certainly, and lo! and behold everybody is out. Not their fault, to be sure, but, after all, a cold welcome. And now, here you are, glad to see me, and looking so bright and happy!—ah! Mademoiselle, I can guess! Trevor did not just pass through town, as Herbert predicted, but loitered on his way, like a wise man, and you have met!"

"Yes, Charlie, we have. But why do you say 'like a wise man?'"

"Have you forgotten the old proverb, 'Most haste worst speed?' He would have missed a great pleasure by a hasty rush through; at least, to my thinking. And now, before Alice comes back, will you tell me how matters stand, and trust me, as you did of old?"

"There is not much to tell, Charlie.

We have met, and he seemed very pleased. He has been here since, and is to dine here to-morrow. We are quitc friends again, but that is all."

"All at present. Well, I can easily believe that it is too soon for anything else. And what does Herbert say?"

"He did not seem to like it at first, but he is quite good-tempered now."

"Is he? Then, Muriel, we must look out for squalls, as the sailors say. Herbert's good temper is a sure sign of mischief brooding. I did think of calling upon Trevor, but, as he is to be here so soon, I shall wait to do that piece of civility till we have met, and postpone my Welsh tour for a few days."

"Your Welsh tour, Charlie?"

"Yes. Don't you know I am on my way to the Vale of Llangollen, to grow romantic, and meditate on the maid who dwelt there? There was one, was there not?"

"I believe there was," said Muriel, laughing. "But you had much better stay here."

"And defer my Welsh experiences? Well, possibly I shall. Be sure of this, dear, if I find that I can in any way be of service to you, I shall not see the Welsh vales and mountains this year."

An eloquent look thanked him, and Alice coming in just then, put a stop to all confidential conversation, by an enthusiastic greeting of her favourite brother. Here was indeed a powerful ally, true in heart and clever in head. Alice already indulged in visions of orange-blossoms, and Herbert looked on gloomily in the distance.

"What *will* Herbert say?" she exclaimed, involuntarily.

"I really don't know, Alice," answered her brother, "and I really don't care. Make yourself happy, child. I shall look after him and myself too."

This was a convincing argument, and

Alice prepared to rejoice and be glad, regardless of whatever black looks Herbert might put on.

And very black those looks were, when Herbert returned to dinner, and found Charlie installed in Lancaster Place.

"How did you come here?" he asked, surlily.

"By train and cab," was the answer.

"And why, may I ask?"

"Because I have a holiday, and came to see Alice (by request of my mother), on my way to Wales."

"When do you go to Wales?"

"At present I do not exactly know. I shall remain some days in London. If Alice would not have taken me in, I should have gone to the hotel hard by."

All this was very unsatisfactory, but Herbert could find no rational objection to offer, in public, at least, to Charlie's plans, and his only consolation was retiring to his own room, and writing a furious letter to

his mother; to which, in due time, he received a reply, evidently concocted with the help of Dr. O'Rourke, in which that lady observed that, though she was willing in every way to forward Herbert's views, she could not see how Charlie could interfere with them, and certainly could neither deprive him of his holiday, nor control his movements when absent from home.

Thus Herbert found no redress, and meantime matters looked worse and worse, as he thought.

The dinner-party came off. The Count and Caryl were there, and Trevor was conspicuously attentive to Muriel, who looked the picture of happiness. He had no idea how fast the image of Lady Beauvilliers was fading from his mind; how the passionate love he bore her, with its hopelessness and its romance, was being lulled to sleep, under the gentle influence of an affection stimulated by flattered pride and the real appreciation of a true-hearted loving woman.

Not even when Herbert made anxious inquiries about Kate did he exhibit any confusion.

"The regiment is still at the same station," he said. "I conclude Beauvilliers is with it; there was no talk of his leaving when I came away; but I have no correspondence with any of them except St. Barbe, and I do not expect a letter from the chief for a mail or two."

"Is this true?" thought Herbert. "Does not Kate write?"

But it was true; she had begged him to write, and he had refused, pointing out the danger, and she had therefore no excuse for writing to him.

"I suppose Kate is as handsome as ever?" was Herbert's next attack.

"I suppose so; but I never think women look their best in India. One misses the English bloom;" and he gave a side glance at Muriel's bright fresh face.

It was no use; every answer that Caryl

gave was more and more pleasing to Muriel, so Herbert dropped the subject, and subsided into a silent watching of every look and word that passed. He drew his own conclusions from all he observed. "No danger of any proposal on his part just yet," was his reflection, in the solitude of his own room at night. "He does not realize how much he likes Muriel, but he may drift into it. She must go home at once; he is not deeply enough in love to follow, and once parted, it will settle down into a friendship again."

Charlie, too, had taken his observations, and had come to the same conclusion as Herbert.

"They neither of them see what they are about," he thought. "This must not go on, unless Trevor means something, or Muriel's happiness will be wrecked once more."

Therefore, on the following morning, he took his way to Caryl's club, and

found him, as he expected, at breakfast.

"I came to ask you, Trevor, if you'd like to run down to-day, to see the field-day at Aldershot?"

"My dear fellow, I have had enough of real work not to care for practice; but I want you to come with me. I promised Miss Gore to inquire if there are any photographs in London of those pictures which I was describing to her last night."

Just what Charlie wanted—here was Muriel's name brought up at once without any effort on his part. He signified at once that Aldershot might do without him that day, and that he would accompany Trevor on his shopping expedition. They strolled away together, and Charlie, as they crossed into Regent Street, said suddenly,

"I did not know that Muriel cared about pictures and high art."

"She has very artistic tastes, that only require development."

"And you intend to undertake that task? You have not long before you. Miss Gore will leave London next week—but you possibly intend to continue the instruction at Ropsley?"

"I did think of paying the old place a visit. It is very pleasant in the Autumn."

"Very," returned Charlie, quickly—"especially with such a pupil as Miss Gore!"

Caryl looked sharply at him.

"You are not jealous, are you?" he said. "I thought it was Herbert who assumed a right to interfere with Miss Gore?"

"A right not conceded to him, Trevor. But I am not jealous; things are just the same with me as when you were at Ropsley. Herbert persists in his insane determination to marry her; I adore her hopelessly, and she *remembers*."

"I wish," said Caryl, helplessly, "that I had never known Kate. It is misery to

both of us, and I could have been very happy with Miss Gore."

"And I think that, in all this, everybody's feelings, and wishes, and happiness have been consulted, except poor Muriel's."

"Do you mean that you blame me entirely for what happened?"

"Yes and No; those who misled and deceived you were bitterly to blame, yet you should not have been misled."

Caryl flung down the end of his cigar uneasily.

"I always felt I went too far with Miss Gore."

"Are you not repeating that fault now?"

"Do you think so? I hope not."

"When Muriel goes back to Ropsley, will she not remember all her visit to London as culminating in one delight—the seeing you again?"

Caryl was silent.

"Trevor," Charlie said, solemnly, "you have the happiness of two lives in your

power—yours and hers. You have the rare opportunity of ending a great wrong, and removing the blight on a young life. Why should you throw this all away?"

"Why, indeed!" groaned Caryl—"because I have been a fool. I love," he paused; "but that love is hopeless. Muriel would be content with all I could give her of my heart, and in time the other might fade; but I have bound myself by a promise, and, when the time comes, I must be free to fulfil it."

Charlie understood the confession only too well.

"I know it all, Trevor," he said. "You need not speak the name, but the promise is absurd! Look at Beauvilliers's age—why, he is likely to outlive Kate, unless he breaks his neck—and that is a chance not worth speculating upon. Besides, is it right to live on with such an understanding?—is it right to put aside your own happiness, and throw back one faithful heart into

patient, silent suffering? and all for a promise, sinful to make, and guilty to keep? I speak strongly, because I feel so—you will forgive me?"

"Freely, Charlie; your words are true."

"If Beauvilliers were an old man, or a dying one, I would say nothing, but that it would have been honester and better to wait awhile, till she was free, yet still unbound by any such promise. It adds to the wrong-doing when you calmly consent to pass a lonely life, and go down to your grave a solitary being, unwept and unhonoured—and all for the sake of a worthless promise, made, I was going to say, to a worthless woman, but Kate is not quite that. She is vain, and fond of power, and of retaining all she ever held—careless and reckless; but she must feel by this time the utter absurdity of such a tie. And all this while, such a brave, true young heart is flung at your feet. I could be half angry with Muriel sometimes for believing

in you so intensely as she does; but the very constancy of that faith has sanctified you in my eyes."

"She has indeed been true; she deserves to be happy, if I could make her so. Charlie, I will ask one thing of you; give me a few days to think over this; let matters go on as they are, and it shall end one way or another when Muriel leaves London."

"So be it. I shall fully expect that all will be well; and now to choose the photographs."

When this important affair was transacted, Caryl took his leave of Charlie, saying he should bring the photographs in the evening, and Charlie went back to Lancaster Place, quite satisfied that all would be well; the fire was lighted, and Muriel's presence would fan it into a flame.

Trevor was so led by those around him that it only needed to keep him away from those influences which would act in Kate's favour. As for Herbert's jealousy, he would be the

rather spurred on by that, and it was plain that his friend, the Count, was a faithful ally of Muriel's. Kate had no friend at Lancaster Gate—no one even to enlighten her as to what was going on—and all would be decided one way or the other before she would know anything about it; for, as Charlie gratefully observed, "India is, thank heaven! a very long way off, and the telegraph is not finished."

CHAPTER IX.

HERBERT'S REFUSAL.

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his desert is small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
And win or lose it all!"

IT is probable that Mrs. Evans heartily wished Herbert in Africa with John and James, when she received another letter, instructing her to go at once to Mrs. Gore, and insist on the necessity of Muriel's instant return, on the ground that Captain Trevor was a daily visitor in Lancaster Place, and that it was very dangerous to Muriel's peace of mind. However, though

the mission was troublesome, it was not difficult. The request was reasonable, and Mrs. Gore at once assented. In fact, the proposed time of Muriel's visit had expired, and it was nothing but natural that Captain and Mrs. Gore should wish her to come home.

Charlie was right. Muriel Gore was to leave London in a few days, and as yet nothing had been said. On the evening preceding her departure, Trevor was there to say "good-bye," and Herbert saw rejoicingly that Muriel seemed in very good spirits. He had not overheard the whisper during one of Alice's songs,

"This is but a short good-bye, Muriel, I shall be in Ropsley before the week is out."

Under the influence of this consolation Muriel went through the farewell in a perfectly resigned manner—so much so that Charlie guessed what had happened, and determined to ask Trevor what was his

decision. He therefore proposed to stroll homeward with Caryl, and smoke his evening cigar by the way, and they went out together.

"Well, Trevor, have you decided? The time is over, and Muriel leaves to-morrow."

"Yes, Charlie, I have; I feel that I have no right to sacrifice her happiness; that I love her very dearly, if not with the passionate love I gave to Kate, and I am resolved to ask her if she can forgive the past, and be my wife."

Charlie's heart came up into his throat. Was it really so? was Muriel to be the wife of Caryl?

The word startled him, it sounded so very distinct, and he was obliged to pause before he could answer cheerily,

"That's right, Trevor, you will do well for yourself and her."

"I am sure of that," was Caryl's answer.

"When is it to be all settled?"

"As soon as I go down to Ropsley."

"Have you told her?"

"No. I prefer to speak when her parent's are close by."

Charlie could not object to this, it was honest and straightforward.

"You are right," he said again; "go down to Rospley, and have it all over at once.

"Why, Charlie," said Trevor, laughing, "you speak as if it was something very dreadful; have you any experience in such matters? for, except in one instance, I have none."

"No," said Charlie, trying to smile, "I know nothing of any such affairs. I shall be back in Ropsley soon, and I shall find you all happy, I hope."

"Thanks, Charlie, you are a good fellow; I don't wonder Muriel likes you so much."

Poor, faithful Charlie! there was a cruel pang at his heart as he heard those words. "Don't thank me, Trevor," he answered; "her happiness is very dear to me. Well, it

is late, I must go home. Good night."

"Good night, then, dear boy; I shall be at the station to-morrow to see her off; tell her so."

"I will," was the answer, and Charlie turned homeward with a great weight on his heart. He had given his darling to Caryl Trevor—he felt and knew it.

Had he done wisely?

He saw that Trevor was, as ever, the slave of the influences around him. It was his own influence over him that brought him to a decision; could Muriel keep him to it? Would that ghost of an old love rise up to haunt their path? If it did, would Muriel gain such an influence that she could combat that dream of the past?

It might be so, "God grant it," he thought, "but my watch is not yet over; the work is well begun, it must go on to the end, till she is his wife; but Muriel, darling," and the tears sprang to his eyes as he thought of the wide distance

there would be between them when she was Caryl's wife, "you are mine to guard and save, even if you do not know it. I am your true knight, your sworn servant; you may know it some day hereafter, if not here, and then, dear, you will feel that I loved you best after all."

So Muriel went back.

Charlie told her, as he helped her into the cab, that Caryl was coming to the station to see her off; and she went on her way rejoicing, all the more so, because, fortunately, an important business matter detained Herbert, and he could not, as he had intended, go down with her.

Of course she was cross-questioned as to all Captain Trevor's sayings and doings, as soon as she arrived at home. Mrs. Gore first attacked her daughter, but with the result of discovering nothing.

Muriel was silent as to Caryl's projected visit to Ropsley. She spoke of him calmly, and without any shyness or excitement;

and what puzzled Mrs. Gore was that she had parted with him, and yet seemed in remarkably good spirits, The old Captain's remark was simply,

"No one ever knows which way a woman is steering. Let the girl alone. As long as my Muriel is happy and contented, that is all I care for; and the less you talk about her and her affairs to that old cat, Mrs. Evans, the better."

"Captain Gore," said his wife, "I am surprised to hear you apply such a name to dear good Mrs. Evans."

"Are you, my dear? Well, if it does not suit you, I'll find another. Shall I say that hypocritical old harridan?"

"Do not insult her by such a name, Captain Gore. You do not know her as I do."

"Don't I? Well, I have no desire for a more intimate acquaintance with her or her character. I don't interfere with your friendship for her, only excuse me from

having any part in it. I always feel when I take her down to dinner, as if I had a slimy serpent twisting round my arm."

This was too much for Mrs. Gore; but when the Captain got off into a tirade upon any pet like or dislike, he was always too much for Mrs. Gore, or, as he expressed it, "carried too many guns;" and flight was her only resource, so she vacated the room directly, and left him looking after her, with a peculiarly knowing expression.

"Yes, yes, my lady," he growled, "I know all about it. Mrs. Evans wants Muriel for Herbert, a black-visaged rascal, if ever there was one. The girl knows better than that. If it were Charlie now, I should say nothing. That boy should have been in the Navy. It is a crying shame tying him down for a clerk; and as for Trevor, I have my notions that he and Muriel understand each other, and that I shall see him here before long. Breakers ahead, Mrs. Evans, and no chart for you

to steer by! If it is only Master Herbert's expectations that go to wreck, I shan't be the one to man the life-boat."

Herbert returned a couple of days after Muriel—it was on the Wednesday night; and he had a long conversation with his mother. She could only say that she felt sure there was no engagement between Trevor and Muriel, and that she had seen her, that she seemed well and happy, and that there was no reason to believe that Trevor was coming to Ropsley. Herbert laid the flattering unction to his soul that possibly a nearer acquaintance with Caryl had broken the spell in Muriel's eyes. She had been so frank, so pleasant. Perhaps she had come to her senses at last, and now was the auspicious moment to press his suit.

By Thursday morning he had fully persuaded himself of this agreeable fact, and immediately after breakfast set out for Captain Gore's house, to call upon Muriel.

That young lady was at home. dreaming over a piece of wool-work, of enormous dimensions, fixed in a frame, and intended, when finished, to represent two little girls and a little boy playing with a dog, around whose neck they were throwing a chain of flowers. It was half done now; but that piece of work was never finished, and is flung aside in some forgotten box, for memories of intense joy and acute pain were woven in with every stitch, till it became a panorama of the past, not well to look upon in those future years.

"Good morning, Muriel," he said, cheerfully, as he entered the room.

"Good morning, Herbert. You are early out of doors."

"I wanted to find you at home—I wanted to say something to you."

"Say it quickly then, for I want to count some stitches—I cannot listen and count too."

"You know what it is."

"Not at all—one, two, three, then two dark greens and four olives—do make haste and say what it is."

"Muriel, do lay aside your work and listen to me."

"Certainly not; I have tasked myself to do all that to-day, and I am just going to put in the blue sky behind the girls' heads."

"Well, then, if you won't, I must speak as I can. You know I love you."

"The old story again!" cried Muriel, putting a blue stitch into the girl's nose. "Now do not revive the subject, you know I detest it."

"Strong language, Muriel; but you must listen. Your girlish fancy for Trevor passed away when you saw him again, did it not?"

Muriel answered nothing, and Herbert went on.

"You have met him, and parted from him, and he has not spoken of love; there

is no bond between you, it is over at last, and if you would pine after him any longer, it would be worse than useless; even your constancy has failed to touch him."

Muriel half started from her seat, but then, trying to speak calmly, she said,

"Go on, I will hear you to the end, and then you shall hear me."

"And now," resumed Herbert, "you must look at the life before you. You have a happy home now, but it cannot last long; your father is not a young man, and his death will leave you and your mother in a far different position; at all events, even if you had the necessaries of middle-class life, its luxuries, even its comforts, would be impossible to you."

"I know all that, Mr. Evans, have you come here only to tell me this?"

"No, Muriel, but I do it to show you that, when I ask you to be my wife, common prudence should lead you to accept a position in which you will command every

luxury you could desire. My mother is old, her death will make me a rich man, and till then she is prepared to act most liberally. Muriel, I have loved you from boyhood; I will try to make you happy; I do not ask you to love me passionately, but to bear with me and let me win your affection."

Muriel paused till the very echo of Herbert's words had died away, and then said in a low voice of suppressed passion,

"Do you ask me to sell myself? What have I ever done or said that you should imagine I would buy house and home, and wealth and ease, at the price of every feeling of truth and honour?"

"Then you are engaged to Trevor?"

"No, I am not, and you know it. I mean truth and honour towards my own better self. I respect myself too much to traffic my heart for gain. What should I be better, if I did so, than the miserable creatures bought and sold in an Eastern

slave-market—perhaps worse, for they cannot help it, and I can."

"This is absurd romance, Muriel, you have filled your head with all sorts of nonsense out of novels. Nobody wants to buy you, I only want you to take a sensible view of things."

"So I do; I perfectly understand this—that you do not for one moment think I love you, and yet you ask me to marry you, just because you fancy that you would like me to be your wife. You are quite content to make me take a false oath before God at His altar, to swear to love you till death parted us, and yet you know I should not feel it, and could not do it."

"Absurd! do you mean to say that everybody intends all they say in church in its full extent?"

"No, I do not mean that. I am sure that, unfortunately, a great many do not, but that is no reason why I should be of the

number. I would rather say a short prayer, and feel every word of it in my heart, than a good many long ones, which to me would be but a form of words. Now that marriage oath, for oath it is, is very short and simple, and, if ever I say it, I will mean every syllable of it."

"When you say it for Caryl Trevor!" sneered Herbert.

"When I say it for Caryl Trevor," replied Muriel, quietly and gravely, with a far-away look in her dark grey eyes, "if ever it pleases God to grant me so much happiness. I am not ashamed to have loved him, nor to tell you so. And now leave me. Do not insult me by any further allusion to your love, or my prospects; and remember this, now, and in all future time, I had rather beg my bread in the streets than be your wife, Herbert Evans."

She left the room. Herbert took up his hat and walked off, muttering,

"We shall see, my lady, we shall see;

but, while I live, you shall never be the wife of Caryl Trevor!"

Still no suspicion of how far matters had gone dawned upon him, and he attributed Muriel's decided refusal to her obstinacy, and her confession of love for Caryl to mere passionate daring. He could not understand how very real Muriel was, how she saw through effect to cause, and looked back to trace the springs of thought and action far beyond their course in the present.

Muriel felt very indignant with Herbert, quite as much for proposing to her, as for his sneers. Those she set down simply to his usual unamiability, and his "bringing up." She could not but see what ruin to all characters brought into contact with her was Mrs. Evans's distorted view of men and things in general. That lady never scrupled to speak of anyone who did not fall in with her peculiar ways, in terms downright discourteous, to say the least of it, though expressed in Scripture phrase-

ology of the choicest kind. Certainly she professed that it was on religious grounds alone that she felt it right to indulge this sanctified slander and vituperation; but how easy it was to learn from her example, to ignore the laws of courtesy and good-breeding in secular cases, and to be sneering and insulting to any who offended.

Then the elect and holy Mrs. Evans had no scruple in relating events as pleased her best, in forgetting just what did not suit her, and imagining just what did. So flagrant had her conduct been on several occasions in this respect, that the world asserted her memory was rapidly going, or that the "old gentleman" himself had got hold of her; but it was only an Evangelical way of carrying out the principle "of doing evil that good may come," in pursuit of which pious projects she invariably said exactly what pleased her, regardless of any consideration but the one supreme necessity that *her* will should be done.

Was it wonderful that this should teach those around her to disregard everything that might stand in their way? All must yield to their wishes, it mattered not how. Love and truth might be trampled under foot, sorrow and misery might follow in the wake, but so that they succeeded, what were the feelings of others? Straws in the balance.

Muriel knew that Herbert had learned his lesson thus. Of the rest of the brothers, with the exception of Charlie, she knew little, and she always declared "Charlie must have been changed at nurse," he was so different from his mother and brother. But Charlie had been gifted with keen sensibilities. When but a child he read his mother's character, and put down her religious pretensions at their true value; and he took a dislike to her, which saved him from contamination.

Yes, Mrs. Evans, saint as she was, was

a very wicked old woman, only she did not know it, and Herbert had taken up all the bad points of her character and added some of his own, and Muriel spoke very mildly when she described his conduct to her father, and said,

"He is a most disagreeable young man."

Nota bene, she did not repeat her speech about Caryl, and when the Captain said, "Well, after all, we cannot quarrel with the family because he chose to ask you to marry him," she remembered Charlie, her true, kind friend, and his power of aiding her, and cheerfully assented, remarking,

"Oh! no, certainly not. Besides, after all, it is his mother's fault; she is the worst of the two—perfectly horrible, I think."

"So do I, my dear, but your mother won't see it in that way, and as long as she does not interfere with you, I shall let the old woman alone; but if once she tries that

on, I shall let her know I am commanding officer of my own frigate,—trust me for that, child!"

CHAPTER X.

AT LAST.

Oh! sweet and fair, oh! rich and rare! that day so long
ago,
The Autumn sunshine everywhere, the heather all a-glow,
The ferns are clad in cloth of gold, the waves sang on the
shore,
Such suns will shine, such waves will sing,
For ever, evermore!

A. F. C. K.

SATURDAY evening came, and with it Caryl Trevor. All day long Muriel had counted the hours, and speculated where she should meet him first. She had studied Bradshaw, till she actually understood it, and calculated that Caryl would leave London before noon, and therefore could not arrive till 5.30, P.M.

Then he must dine and dress, and most probably he would go to the Albert Hotel, which overlooked the promenade; the band would be playing, all the world would be walking there, and he would surely be coming out, and then——But at this blissful point the thought intruded itself—would he miss the train?—or would he think it too soon to leave London, and come by the later one?—if so—and she turned again to Bradshaw—it would be 11 P.M. before he could arrive, so that she might only catch her first glimpse of him in church next day.

For once she blessed the conservative notions which prevented her townspeople adopting the free-church system; he must ask to be shown to a seat, and whose would he ask for? Hope told a flattering tale, and held forth the prospect that it would be Captain Gore's, and they might even share the same hymn-book between them! No doubt all this was very wrong; she

ought to have remembered that in church she should have been oblivious to all sublunary considerations, and that studying Bradshaw was a waste of precious time. But was she the only one who ever did this? How many fair young heads have bent over Bradshaw's intricate columns with an interest they never felt even in Scott or Dickens or Thackeray! How many bright eyes have traced the numbers, and finally getting confused over A.M. and P.M., and branch lines and junctions, have had to begin over and over again, before they arrived at the desired result?

And then, as regards the pew system, has it not its warmest advocates amongst those who cannot enter into the cold abstraction that all earthly ties are nothing in the house of God?—one of the arguments used for the division of sexes and families in open churches. Nothing, in His house, when they are so much in His sight?—when forgetfulness of them is punished by

His laws and odious to Him? Do we pray the worse for having some dear one by our side, some love, that we can ask Him to bless both—some sorrow He can strengthen both to bear? We know it is not so, and the advocates of the free church system must look to some stronger argument for this severance of families and friends, if they would win adherents to their cause, They have some strong ones, doubtless; the best of all, that rich and poor should be alike in His house. That there should be no reserved seats for rank or wealth, we all gladly admit that; but as for the other argument, it goes against all our best nature, and we put it away as unworthy of us.

So, after all, if the wish to kneel by Caryl's side was the only one that induced Muriel to disapprove of open churches, there was not so much fault to be found with it, and she might be forgiven both the hours she passed over Bradshaw, and the

hope that she might meet Caryl in church, in "our pew, too."

As ill-luck would have it, Dr. O'Rourke arrived that afternoon, being engaged to preach a charity sermon in the parish church, and Mrs. Evans arranged a "tea and hassock" party in his honour. This was a sort of entertainment in the style of a social sandwich, where prayers and expounding came in between cake and coffee, and light refreshments and wine, like the slices of ham between the bread and butter. If there *was* a kind of thing which Muriel detested more than another, it was this; and on this special occasion she was reduced to a state of actual despair, by her mother producing a note of invitation, and announcing her intention of accepting it, for herself and her daughter.

"What is Mrs. Evans thinking about?" she said. "August, moonlight, and the thermometer standing at any height you like! Mamma, I shall not go; you can say so."

"My dear Muriel, you must; it is so delightful to meet Doctor O'Rourke."

"He is a detestable man!" was the answer, "with his silky hypocrisy. He is only endurable when Mrs. Evans is out of the way."

"Muriel, I will take no refusal."

"Well, then, I shall go in my ball-dress, and when we are asked to play and sing, as we always are, I shall sing a negro melody, and ask Dr. O'Rourke to lead off the chorus."

"You would not, surely!" cried her alarmed parent.

"Don't you make too sure of that," laughed the Captain. "Look here, my dear, if you insist on the girl's going, she shall do as she has said, and no harm either; but if she goes, so do I, invited or not. I don't choose her to meet that dirty rascal, Herbert Evans, without me by her side. And I'll lead off the chorus, too. I know 'Camptown Races;' we'll try that."

Mrs. Gore was fairly overpowered; she was only too glad to excuse Muriel, and the Captain and his daughter were left in peace, after their dinner, to their proposed stroll on the promenade.

Was there ever in after-years so calm a sea, so bright a moonlight, such a soft, sweet scent of sea-weed and salt air? No, never! In those after-years Muriel's eyes looked upon many a fair scene—on Syrian sunsets and Roman moonlights—on the eternal snows of the Alps and the blue waters of the Grecian Archipelago, but none ever came back upon her memory with such fulness of rich perfection as that one evening at Ropsley-on-the-Sea. For the first thing she saw as, leaning on her father's arm, she came up the promenade, was Caryl, wandering up and down, and evidently watching for someone.

Captain Gore saw him almost as soon as Muriel did.

"Why, there's Trevor," he said. "How

well the fellow is looking!" and then hailed him in the frankest and most unsuspicious way. "What brings you here, Trevor? Delighted to see you, and to find that you remember old friends. Nothing like it—nothing like it. 'Auld lang syne,' for me."

"Thank you, Captain Gore," was Caryl's answer, looking at Muriel as he spoke. "I came back to see old friends, as you say." And he turned to walk by their side.

And now the Captain was plunged in difficulties; he did not know what to say. Trevor's unfortunate engagement made it awkward to allude to the past, and after profound consideration, he was about to begin on the subject of the service Caryl had seen, when, as he would himself have expressed it, an old naval comrade "hove in sight," and the Captain was too glad to get rid of his embarrassment by tucking his arm under that of the Admiral, and leav-

ing Caryl and Muriel to follow behind, nothing loth, we may be sure.

If every word spoken during a love-making walk were taken down by a shorthand writer, it would be a singularly uninteresting record. So little is said; so much is looked! Silence is so eloquent. In truth, modern love-making is not full of sentiment or romance. Men detest a scene, and a true woman is always shy of making impassioned speeches, or of hearing them either.

So they strolled side by side, and looked at the moon, and listened to the waves, and spoke of the bygone times when they had walked there before; and at last Caryl said,

"Muriel, you have forgiven me, I know. I was a great fool, but I always loved you; I do now, very dearly. You will love me too, will you not?"

"I always loved you," was the simple answer, "and you know it."

"You darling!" said Caryl, and his hand sought Muriel's.

What a shiver of joy ran through her! At last!—at last, after all these long years! The tears of exquisite happiness sprung to her eyes, and she let her hand rest passive in that of Caryl—her own Caryl at last! That was all; but it was to Caryl the dawn of a new life—to Muriel the realization of an old one.

That very evening, before he left the Gores, Caryl drew the Captain aside, and told him what had passed.

"I suppose it's all right," was the old sailor's answer. "I have a notion in my head that the girl always liked you. Come to me on Monday morning, and we'll see what is to be done."

"I may join you to-morrow, if we meet in church or elsewhere?"

"Certainly, if you like; but keep the matter quiet till we have settled it."

Muriel slept very little that night; she

was too happy, and she watched in, the dawn of the day which was to see her kneeling in church by Caryl's side, his affianced wife. She looked so pale in the morning that her mother remarked it; but, before she could answer, she saw a series of nods and winks and telegraphic signals going on, intended to express to her, on her father's part, that Mrs. Gore was not yet informed of what was going on, and was not to be just yet.

"It's the hot weather, mamma," he said, "and we walked a long time last night. Did you enjoy yourself at the prayer meeting?—is that the right word, by the way? You kept it up till late; I was asleep long before you came home."

"I derived much *edification*," said Mrs. Gore, as severely as so good-natured and pliable a creature could speak. "Dr. O'Rourke was most eloquent, and he brought with him a delightful man from the Fiji Islands—a converted cannibal.

He told me that by grace he had learned to prefer roast beef to his late hideous diet."

"My dear," said Captain Gore, "I never understood that cannibalism was a daily habit with the Fijians; I thought it had something to do with their religion—their fasts, or festivals, or something."

"Captain Gore," replied his wife, pouring out the tea very deliberately, "what can you know about it? Surely that dear man understands his own country best."

"Was he black?" said Muriel—"but indeed, mamma, I need not ask. Unless he was of a decided copper tinge, he *could* not be interesting. Do you think, if we could dye some of the heathens in our alleys and courts, that Dr. O'Rourke would cast a glance that way? It would cost less, and be far more useful, I think, to make them decent citizens than to turn these dusky gentlemen into very expensive and very uncertain Christians."

"You talk nonsense, Muriel," answered her mother; "they have already every opportunity of learning the truth, if they would avail themselves of it; whereas it is clearly our duty to bring that knowledge to the heathen of distant lands."

"Charity begins at home," said the Captain; "and converts cost so much, Jews especially—fifteen hundred a-piece, they tell me, and not first-class."

Muriel laughed, her mother frowned; but the Captain's object had been attained, and the conversation turned off a dangerous subject.

Captain Gore lingered after breakfast, and telegraphed to Muriel to remain when her mother went to dress for church.

"Look here, child," he said, "we must trim our course warily. If your mother knows to-day what passed last night, she'll go straight ahead and tell the Evans's, and there'll be confusion. Now, you see, we had better have it settled, and then no one

can interfere. Now, she'll see Trevor at church, and I shall tell her, before he starts, just haphazard, as it were, that we saw him last night. Poor Aunt Sophia! she's dead and gone, or she could have kept your mother in order—not that she wants it, bless her! except when Mother Evans gets hold of her; and that woman beats me! Go, and get yourself up, dear, and look your best, and we'll anchor in port before long."

With which nautical prediction he dismissed his daughter.

On the way to church, Mrs. Gore having been informed "haphazard" of Trevor's arrival, started the subject, by saying,

"So Captain Trevor is here again! How is he looking?—is he pining for Kate?"

"He is looking very well," replied Muriel, with a smile, "and not pining at all."

"Some people have no feeling, I think."

"My dear mother, it is so long ago! Is he to be miserable all his life about a woman who did not love him half as well as he deserves?"

"There may be a question about his deserts," said Mrs. Gore, meditatively. "He always was a hero of yours, I know. I confess I can't see anything in him, and never could, but a very well dressed young man. Besides, I thought you believed that there could be only one real love in a life."

"In a woman's life, I think so still; but it is so very different with men. In their stirring, active lives, they rub off the bloom of intense remembrances—we sit at home and cherish it."

"And very stupid to do so; but, as for your romances and dreams, they are very far above me. Your father loved me; I did not care about him, but, after he had proposed ten times, in ten following years, once a year, I really felt his constancy

deserved a reward, so I married him, and we have been very happy ever since—no romance, no nonsense, all plain downright common sense."

"What! mother, no romance in ten years' constancy!"

Mrs. Gore blushed (she had been a very handsome woman, and a blush became her yet).

"My dear, that was because he was at sea a great part of the time, and saw no one else."

"No one so handsome," said Muriel, truthfully.

Mrs. Gore was not beyond the influence of "appreciation;" she looked pleased, but thought it right to depreciate.

"My love, beauty is nothing—goodness is all; but I hope some day you may find a husband as kind and good as your father is to me."

The speech was lost on Muriel's unconscious ear, for there, by the old church porch, stood Trevor.

Mrs. Gore greeted the young man warmly—she always liked old friends. Muriel's dreams all came true, for she offered Caryl a seat, and they entered the church together, and, crowning joy! they sang out of the same hymn-book. He walked home with them afterwards, and again in the evening he joined them in their usual stroll. Mrs. Gore got uneasy, she feared a repetition of old days.

"Wait till to-morrow," said the Captain mysteriously, "and then, my dear, if Trevor does not come forward, I'll put a stop to all this."

But next day, before breakfast was fairly over, Trevor did arrive, and, as the Captain said, "came forward." No possible objection could be raised to his proposals, and, leaving the lovers together, the Captain adjourned to the drawing-room, and, in tones of triumph, informed his wife.

"It is all right, my dear—go and speak to him; but I can't spare my girl just yet—it is so sudden."

"I should say three or four months, at least," said Mrs. Gore, half weeping. "We shall miss her—shall we not?"

Thus it was settled.

After a short stay at Ropsley, Caryl was to go to London to arrange about the settlements, and from thence to Trevor Hall, to prepare for the reception of his bride. There was much to be done in the way of renovation there; so as it was now the month of August, it was proposed by Caryl that November should see the all-important day, and that the "happy couple" should return for Christmas to Ropsley. To this Mrs. Gore objected, as not giving time enough, and spoke of the next Easter. Both Captain Gore and Trevor objected to this long delay, and, finally, the end of January was fixed upon, and a trip to Italy, in that propitious time of year for a journey in the sunny south. Trevor was delighted to have all settled before he met any of his old Ropsley

friends, whom he had studiously avoided; but now the more widely spread was the news, the better he liked it. He was very proud of Muriel—proud of her personal appearance, of her talents, of her constancy.

"Come out with me, darling," he said, when at last they were alone; "let us go upon the beach, as we used to do."

"Yes, if you wish it, Caryl; but I had promised to go and pass the morning with Miss Jerome; will you go with me, to excuse myself?"

"To be sure; I shall be delighted to see that dear old lady, we were always the best of friends."

"You won't mind, then?—because I thought it might be painful to you."

Caryl looked grave.

"You dear, considerate pet!" he said, after a short pause; "I must get over all that sort of thing now. You see, dear, the sun is shining, so we will forget all the clouds and the storms."

And so, in the brilliant, August sunshine, they set out together, as happy as could possibly be, all unconscious of the cloud arising, "like a man's hand," on the distant Eastern horizon; where, in the far-off land which Caryl had left so lately, Lord Beauvilliers lay dead.

CHAPTER XI.

SUNSHINE.

Who will believe that he heard her say,
With the sweet, soft voice, in the dear old way;
The utmost wonder is that I hear,
And see you, and love you, and kiss you, dear.

St. Paul's Magazine, 1868.

MISS JEROME'S neat little house stood on the direct road to the beach. It was rather isolated, being one of a new terrace, hereafter to be joined to a square, and a crescent, and a street, and other buildings, as yet only existent on the architect's design; and, after an easterly gale, the path-way was usually blocked with fine sea-sand, drifted up from the shore by the force of the wind.

On this occasion, however, no rude blasts had disturbed the peace of the inhabitants of Athelstane Terrace, nor buried their little flower-plats under a dusty shower, and the crimson geraniums and golden nasturtiums were looking their brightest and best. Caryl knocked at the door, and Muriel was surprised to hear Miss Jerome call out very distinctly,

"Run and open the door, John."

"Has the old lady set up a footman?" asked Caryl, in a whisper.

"I really don't understand it at all," said Muriel.

At that moment Miss Jerome's head appeared above the window-blind, and, seeing Muriel, she nodded cheerfully, and, an instant afterwards, opened the door.

"So kind of you, my dear," she said; "and of Captain Trevor too, under the peculiar circumstances."

Muriel was puzzled. What could be the matter? She caught sight of a man's hat

and coat hanging in the hall, and of a stout walking-stick in the umbrella-stand, and last, not least, of a well-smoked clay pipe and a tin box of tobacco placed on the little hall-table. Certainly there was a man in the house; and Miss Jerome's words were so mysterious, could it be possible that she too had faithfully cherished some old romance, and that the reward had come at last?

"We won't intrude, Miss Jerome," she said; "you have visitors."

"Come in, my dear," answered the old lady, looking cautiously around, and carefully locking and bolting the door after her visitors. "I am all alone—my little maid is gone to buy some fish for my dinner."

"I thought you called John to open the door," said Trevor. "And do you smoke, Miss Jerome?"

"I!—oh! no, no. But I will explain. First tell me, doesn't it look as if I had a man in the house?"

"Very much indeed," laughed Trevor. "Unless you have taken to wear a pea-jacket and a chimney-pot hat, and use tobacco."

"I am so glad you think it looks like it," answered the old lady, rather inconsequentially. "These things were lent me by my little maid's father. You must have heard of the robbery in the Terrace yesterday evening. My neighbour, Miss Jones, was sitting reading her Bible, while her maid was gone to church. She is a lone woman like myself, you know, Muriel, my dear, and there came a knock at the door, and two men stood there when she opened it, and they said, 'Is Mr. Jones at home?' And she answered (so incautiously, my dear), 'There is no Mr. Jones.' 'Well, marm,' said the tallest of the two, 'if his name are not Jones, what name do he go by?' (Such grammar, my love!). And poor Miss Jones, quite taken in, said, 'There is no man here, Jones or other-

wise. What do you mean? I am a respectable woman.' And with that, my dear, they came in and tied the poor old lady to a chair, and rummaged her house before her eyes; and when the maid came in, all the plate was gone (by special mercy, my dear, only albata), and her desk, with nothing in it, and all the eatables; and she says they swore horribly at finding so little. But it was the horror of the scene, my love. And the men are not caught yet, so I have taken these precautions; and it is so kind of you, Captain Trevor, for now if anybody is lurking about, they will see a man in the house."

It was impossible to resist laughing; but Caryl won the old lady's heart by saying that if it was any comfort to her, he was at the hotel close by, and would smoke his nightly cigar in front of the Terrace.

Miss Jerome had no leisure to look more closely at Captain Trevor, and to congratulate him on his improved appearance.

"So brown and so manly, and looking so bright and cheerful." And then she caught sight of Muriel's beaming, blushing face. "Why, Muriel, my dear, how well you look! Why, what is all this—is there" and she stopped.

"Yes, there is, dear Miss Jerome," said Caryl—"there is a subject for congratulation. You see, we have come at last to know how much our happiness depends upon each other—that is to say, Muriel and I."

"No!" cried Miss Jerome—"you don't say so? I am very, very glad! I thought—well, never mind what I thought, I am only a foolish old woman. I might have guessed, when Muriel used to come and hear the news from India; and I remember now she always used to ask if you were well; and luckily Kate always wrote about you, so I could tell her."

Caryl wondered how much Kate had told, but one look at Muriel's face convinced

him that she at all events was in ignorance of anything further than of his having met Kate in India, so he dismissed the fear and smiled.

"Muriel was more fortunate than I was," he said. "For I could hear hardly anything of her."

"Now that is strange," said Miss Jerome simply, "when I wrote pages and pages about her and all her doings! Never mind, it has come right at last, just as it should have been at first; and Muriel, my love, let me kiss you. Captain Trevor, you are a very lucky man. Dear me, dear me, how the world goes round!"

She was indeed delighted; she loved Muriel dearly, and she had pitied Trevor most sincerely in his hour of sorrow; besides, her kindly nature rejoiced in all happiness that befell others. Yet when they had left her, the good old face clouded over, and she resumed a letter she had begun to write with much reluctance; the words

would not come, the ideas would not flow freely.

"Shall I tell her?" she thought. "What will she say? It is far better so, yet she writes in bad spirits, poor child, and I do not like to vex her,—and it *will* vex her. It is so strange too. She says she feels as if some great misfortune were hanging over her. I often feel that myself, and nothing comes of it. I shall tell her so, and, after all, I need not say anything about this. I don't know that it is public yet; it is no business of mine; I shall ignore it all for the present, and she may possibly hear it from somebody else, and she will write, and I shall know what to say." And thus Miss Jerome deferred the evil day.

Far better had she written, and broken the news to Kate; far better had she spoken of the evident happiness of the lovers, and of Trevor's unmistakeable affection for Muriel; but it was not so written in the book of fate, and the letter was posted, and

the Indian mail went out, and no word of what happened reached Lady Beauvilliers.

Before sunset that day, all Ropsley knew that Captain Trevor and Miss Gore were engaged, but, strange to say, Herbert was the last to hear it. He had been sulking all Sunday in his room; his mother had not caught sight of Trevor at church, and was unaware of his arrival; and all Monday he had shut himself up in his office, where no one dare speak familiarly to him when the black mood was on him, till he came home, as usual, to a seven o'clock dinner.

There round the table (he was late, and dinner waited for no one) sat his mother, Dr. O'Rourke, and the converted cannibal, who certainly seemed quite to appreciate English beef and mutton. Mrs. Evans looked steadily at Herbert, and drew very little comfort from his looks. He was more than usually gloomy and sullen, but she felt assured that he did not know what had taken

place, or he would have spoken of it at once.

She went on with her soup in silence; what to say, how to break the intelligence, she could not divine. Dr. O'Rourke saw her embarrassment, and came to the rescue.

"We were talking when you came in, Herbert, of this extraordinary affair—Miss Gore's engagement to Captain Trevor."

"There is nothing in it," said Herbert; "they met in London, that was all."

"Then you do not know that he is here?"

"Here! no; who says so?"

"I met him this afternoon walking with Miss Gore."

With difficulty Herbert suppressed the oath that rose to his lips, and tried to answer calmly,

"Very possibly; he may be here, he may be walking with Miss Gore, but that does not prove the existence of any engagement."

"There I agree with you; but just before that, I had been calling upon Mrs. Gore, and from her received the intelligence; therefore, on meeting them, I ventured to stop and offer my congratulations (a mere form of society, as you know), and they were very graciously accepted."

Herbert gulped down a large glass of strong sherry before he spoke, and then it was only to say, in tones of suppressed passion,

"He is fool enough to be drawn into anything. Charlie has done this. I wish them joy—but they are not married yet!"

The ex-cannibal looked curiously at the young man, and wondered if this was English Christianity; for he foresaw, as plainly as he saw that dark expression, that mischief was brewing, and that something was possible to occur to prevent the marriage, equivalent to the expedient to which such a character would have resorted in Fiji—the conquering and eating the de-

tested rival; and he speculated whether the Christian habit of breaking hearts, or the Fijian custom of sacrificing bodies, was the worst. On the whole, he decided in favour of Fiji.

The dinner passed off heavily enough, so did the evening, and Herbert had no opportunity of speaking to his mother till the next morning; and then he expressed to her, in no measured terms, his opinion of her allowing Charlie to come up to London.

Mrs. Evans declared that she had no power to prevent it, and that however much she regretted Herbert's disappointment, she could not sacrifice her own position for his sake.

"It is not over yet," said Herbert, finally. "We have to see yet what Kate will say to it, and that I shall ascertain for myself. Do not attempt to argue with me —leave me to manage my own affairs. You declined to interfere when your interference would have done good, and your

part in this play is ended." And with that he walked out of the room.

A telle mère, tel enfant. Hypocrisy, pride, and untruth on the one hand; passion, disrespect, and unscrupulousness on the other. As she had sowed so had she reaped, and so will reap all who sow such seed; it will bear a bitter harvest here and hereafter.

Herbert did write to Kate as he had threatened, and gave his own version of the affair—which was that Caryl, weak-minded as ever, had been led on by Charlie and Muriel, now grown from a simple girl to a clever woman, to take this step; that he might admire her, but did not love her; and that he would be miserable, unless some friend, with influence over him, remonstrated with him, and put a stop to this hasty and ill-considered match.

But this letter could not go till the next mail, and when it reached its destination Kate had left not only the station, but

India. The body of poor Lord Beauvilliers had been sent home, to be interred in the family vault; and Kate did not accompany it, for the shock of his sudden death, caused by a fall from a spirited horse which he was breaking in, had quite upset her. She remained till the following mail at Bombay, and went to Alexandria. There she met a Colonel and Mrs. Stanley, whom she had known when first in India, and they persuaded her to go with them, *viâ* Trieste, to the north of Italy, and share their villa on Lago Lugano.

It thus happened that all letters missed her, and it was not till she was settled there that she established the necessary communication with her lawyer. Her settlements had been very large, and Beauvilliers had, besides, left her all that he could, so that the distant cousin who inherited the title only came in for the entailed estates.

Miss Jerome wrote to her, but having

once or twice mentioned the engagement, and received no answer to the communications she made that touched upon any of them, she could not decide whether all or any of her letters had reached Lady Beauvilliers; and, on the chance that these special ones had done so, she dropped the subject, as possibly an unpleasant one to her ladyship.

When Winter fairly set in, the Stanleys persuaded Kate to go with them to Rome. She had no ties in England, for her father was dead; her own health was still bad, and she consented. She mourned for Lord Beauvilliers very sincerely; he had been always kind to her, and her wrongdoings were more from impulse than deliberation. Her passion for Caryl was lulled for awhile, and though she was determined, when a decent time had elapsed, to marry him, yet she was equally determined that it should be a decent time—the stipulated year of widowhood—and she

was not surprised that she had had no letter from him. She felt sure that he, too, was waiting, and would at least let six months elapse before he wrote to her, or sought her.

Herbert's letter and Miss Jerome's, containing the announcement, were still travelling about; they had finally been sent to the English agent of the late lord. This gentleman was on his Autumn holiday, and it was not till his return that they were sent to the family solicitor, who, seeing they were several months old, thought it was not necessary to send them on at once; he could enclose them in a parcel he had to send the following week, containing papers and several other old letters; but the law's delays intervened—the parcel was delayed, and it was not till after Christmas that it reached Rome and Lady Beauvilliers. So far fate had favoured Muriel, and how happily the time had passed, no words could ever tell.

Muriel went back to all her girlish trust in her hero—her faith in all that is grand and true. She laid aside unconsciously the cynicism that had been creeping over her, and she concentrated all her energies upon loving Caryl. She believed intensely in the goodness and mercy of God, who had given him back to her; and she had a most perfect confidence that He would bless her love, and make it the sunshine of her after-life. Every good and noble quality in her came out, like flowers in sunshine; but it must be confessed that her intellect lay dormant. It does not require talent to love; it does not require high cultivation or great intellect—rather the reverse; it is so simple, it comes so naturally, that education and learning are quite unnecessary. To practise the art in perfection, we must enter on that earthly kingdom of heaven and its bliss, as we must enter on the eternal one, "like little children." Into that kingdom where only

love is needed Muriel had entered, and there she passed her time in loving and being loved.

Caryl, too, was thoroughly happy. He was idolized by a woman, young, handsome, and good, whose constancy had been tried by long years of waiting. What could an easy-going man want more? He was not disturbed by any jealous fears on his own part, or any suspicions of his paying too much attention to others on Muriel's. He lived in a serene land, with unclouded skies and calm sunshine, and it was a halcyon rest to him. He loved Muriel very dearly; it was such a different sort of love from that he had felt for Kate. This was so quiet and peaceful—that so stormy and passionate.

And so they both slept, he in heart, and she in intellect, and they dreamt the same fair dream. Oh! Mrs. Gore, Mrs. Gore, why did you delay the marriage?—what evil angel, in guise of parental affection,

and the necessity of a proper *trousseau*, tempted you to oppose its taking place in November?

The dream would have lasted for life. Caryl and Muriel would have jogged along together, and never imagined but that they loved each other better than anyone else in the world loved anyone else, and then I should never have had the task of writing this story. Muriel's life would have ended then and there, like the old story-books, with "they lived happy ever after." But it was not so written.

Meantime, the months went on. Trevor Hall was made ready, and the *trousseau* progressed.

Charlie came back, and stood guard, as it were, over Muriel, to shield her from Herbert; and Herbert, expecting by every mail a reply to his letter to Kate, waited for that in silent patience. Only once did a cloud come over the scene, and that was about six weeks after the engagement,

when Miss Jerome received the news of Lord Beauvilliers's death.

Caryl was in London, and at first Muriel was a little uneasy—she could not tell why, but the casual manner in which he mentioned it in one of his daily letters quite set her mind at rest. It was very odd, but still it was so, that the very next day after the news came Charlie was obliged to go to London on business—or, at least, so he said—but not odd that when there he should go and see Caryl.

He found him somewhat quiet and depressed; and Charlie questioned him closely, but Trevor's answer re-assured him.

"Charlie, I knew what I was about when I proposed to Muriel, and I will not break my faith to her; besides, Lady Beauvilliers may have changed her mind; my absence may have estranged her; she may never claim my foolish promise; and if she does, I shall tell her truly that Muriel is

very dear to me, and that she must be my wife."

It sounded all right enough, but Charlie was very much relieved when, on Trevor's return to Ropsley for a short visit late in October, he said that he had heard nothing of Kate, he had expected a letter by every mail, but three or four had come in since the one announcing Lord Beauvillier's death, and none had arrived. He felt sure that Kate must have heard of his engagement—indeed, he knew that Miss Jerome had written, and it was therefore probable that she had quite given up all idea of claiming his promise.

Charlie was obliged to acknowledge that it looked very like it. To an indolent-minded man like Caryl, who had pledged himself to one course, it was a relief that Kate had acted thus. One sharp, acute pang he had felt when he first knew that Kate was free, and that, by his own act,

he had placed a barrier between them; but then, as he reflected on all the difficulties that her claiming him would bring about, he felt thankful that she had spared him certain trouble, and possible dishonour.

He knew he had been hardly able to contend against her when every earthly consideration, and every heavenly one too, was backing him up, when to yield would have been ruin to both; but now——he put away the thought, but he was sincerely thankful for Kate's silence. He felt himself absolved from his promise, and when Christmas came, and yet no word of her, or from her, arrived, except the scanty news which Miss Jerome had to give—that she was in Italy, and intending to remain the Winter there,—he went down to Ropsley, fully prepared to enjoy himself, and to look forward to the approaching marriage with as bright anticipations as Muriel herself.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LETTER THAT CAME TO ROME.

Yet as we lay them down, and thought resumes again the
loosened rein
Of fancy, how our minds are fraught with a sad pleasur-
able pain;
For ah! how sharply we contrast, whilst living o'er our
lives again,
In the warm sunset of the past, the difference between now
and then!

XITNON.

A BRIGHT January morning in Rome, one of those delicious days cool enough to make a wood fire pleasant in the large tile-floored salon of the Palazzo Ruffini, warm enough to render a lounge on the Pincio the best occupation for the sunny hours.

"Good morning, Lady Beauvilliers,"

said a tall, gentlemanly Englishman, as the young widow entered the room, dressed, it must be remarked, in most becoming mourning.

"Good morning, Colonel Stanley. What a splendid day for our drive to Tivoli! Where is your wife?"

"Decorating, I suppose. She used to say that I took so long shaving that she was obliged to equalize matters by prolonging her toilette operations; but since I have left it off, I don't find that she is at all quicker in the process. I suppose she brushes her back hair; we are exempt from that martyrdom, except in a very small degree."

Kate smiled.

"If being a long while at her toilette is her only fault, you ought to be a happy man; besides, it is a compliment to yourself, she desires to please you as much as when you were 'courting her,' as the old phrase has it."

"Is anybody abusing me behind my back?" said Mrs. Stanley, entering the room at this moment—a fair, lively, good-tempered little woman, as bright as the Roman sunshine, and with a smile nearly as sweet as a Roman one, and that is saying a good deal.

"We ought to have been abusing you, my dear," answered the Colonel, "on the principle that listeners never hear any good of themselves. I only trust that you caught nothing of our conversation, which would add to your already overweening self-conceit."

Mrs. Stanley laughed, and they sat down to breakfast; for the Colonel detested the foreign plan of coffee and rolls in his bedroom at eight A.M., and a lunch at eleven, and adhered to the English habit of a solid breakfast at nine. Kate was looking very delicate, and her deep mourning made her seem even paler and thinner; there was a sadness in her eyes which toned down their restless

brilliancy, and she certainly was more attractive than ever. Her husband had now been dead nearly six months, and she had an indefinite expectation of hearing from Caryl very soon. She was ignorant of his address, she only knew that he was in England, and that probably a letter to his club would find him; but the time had not yet come, she would wait and give him a chance of writing first. If he did not, then she would still have the resource of reminding him of his oath, and asking him if he wished to keep it.

It was too early for her to go much into society, but in Rome, as everywhere else, science and archaiology are made the excuse for much gaiety, which even those in deep mourning may share in with propriety; and the English Archaiological Society, with its expeditions to places of interest in the neighbourhood, provided its members with a series of pleasant pic-nics, which, however, left on the memory of the

younger members very confused ideas as to the history and construction of aqueducts, and churches, and temples. It was one of these which the Stanleys and Lady Beauvilliers were about to join on an expedition to Tivoli. There was to be a lecture on the temple by a celebrated and aged antiquarian, assisted, and now and then contradicted, by an equally celebrated young one; and there was to be a lunch on the platform of the temple, when, as Colonel Stanley remarked, there would be a good opportunity for drinking the health of the Sibyls.

The Colonel very much preferred one of these open-air archaiological meetings to "going down a hole," by which irreverent expression he meant the various excavations into which he had been dragged by his wife, and from which he had emerged very hot, very dusty, and wholly unedified, and with "nothing to wash down the dust," as he said; therefore he prepared to start in the very best of tempers, and the party

were soon on their way to the trysting-place, by the Porta Pia.

It was a gay scene. Carriages were arriving, filled with good-looking and well-dressed Englishwomen and their fair "American cousins." Many of the horses' heads were adorned with the tail-feathers of the cock-pheasant, and some had bells which jangled merrily as they trotted along. Solitary young men were running here and there, and taking possession of the spare box seats, and, once seated in triumph, leant over with an air of possession, chatting with those inside, to the despair of the unfortunates who, not able to dispose of themselves, were obliged to charter fresh carriages, and squabbled together about antiquities all the way to Tivoli.

Colonel Stanley's equipage was, of course, a centre of attraction, and the two vacant seats were soon filled—the young antiquary claiming one, and a travelling chaplain the other.

Kate thoroughly enjoyed herself. The air was so delicious, the view of the distant Alban Hills in their veil of delicate blue, so charming that she put away the past and the future, and gave herself up to the present. The first stop was at Adrian's Villa; and here the Colonel, totally neglecting the learned disquisitions on the original intention of sundry masses of ruins, hunted about for violets, even then peeping shyly from under the ferns, which grew profusely about; and, when he had succeeded in finding a few, brought them back to his wife with the air of a victor.

"I am afraid, dear," she said, as she took them from him, "that you have missed all Mr. Forrester's delightful explanation of the date of the wall?"

"Very likely, my love; it *is* a wall—any fool can see that; and it does not signify when it was built—at least, not to me. When *are* they going on to Tivoli? I am hungry!"

"You very unlearned and modern individual!" said Mrs. Stanley, laughing. "You deserve no lunch at all; but, for your consolation, we are going directly. Where is Lady Beauvilliers?"

"I met her just now with the chaplain. Trust the parsons for that—they always know a good match."

"My dear! Mr. St. Aubyn (or St. Alban, as he says it should be) is a strict celibate, and so intelligent!"

"That's no proof of his intelligence, Mrs. Stanley. There never was a celibate yet, in the clerical line, that did not get a call to marry, if he met a woman willing to have him, with anything over five hundred a-year. I know the dodge; he says that 'celibacy is a counsel of perfection' he advises to other priests, but feels unequal to carry out himself."

"Why, where on earth, my love, did you pick that up? I have heard that, too."

"Don't you remember the fellow at

Fernlands, just before we were ordered to India? He preached a series of sermons on priestly celibacy, and married an heiress within six months. Well, he said that, when he was reproached with having fallen away from "his high standard,"—and I picked it up. I shall go and see after Lady Beauvilliers, though I believe she can take very good care of herself; but I distrust your priestly celibates."

Kate was in no danger from Mr. St. Albans, though the priestly youth was already meditating on his own inability to keep that particular "counsel of perfection." She was thinking of the days that might come, when Caryl and she should wander through those lovely scenes, and look together on the blue Alban Hills and Soracte, with its crown of snow. She was thinking of him very gently—very fondly, and then flashed upon her the memory of Muriel, and a bitter pang of jealousy ran through her, that even he, whom she had

so loved, should have cared for that "romantic girl." But she dismissed the thought with a smile; soon—very soon, either he would write, or a letter from her would bring him; and she smiled so brightly on Mr. St. Albans that the much-tempted youth felt it impossible not to fling himself at her feet, and determined to do it, and leave others to the high and dreary standard he had once preached so eloquently.

The day passed on; the evening twilight, so short in these southern lands, closed in; the gay party came back to Rome; and there, on the table, lay a budget of English letters, and a large packet, carefully sealed up, for Kate. She took it, and went up to her own room. The candles were lighted, the logs burning brightly on the hearth; a bouquet of deep-toned crimson camelias, mixed with fragrant lilies of the valley, stood on the table. Every detail of that scene was burnt into her heart, to be remembered in future years, as she seated herself in the old

carved arm-chair, and opened the packet.

First she came to the papers on law business, and she looked them carelessly through. Her dowry was secure, the settlements all right, and she laid them down and closed her eyes, and thought of the wealth she should bring to Caryl. She did not expect any letter from him, enclosed in a packet sent from her lawyers, whose address he did not even know. Suddenly, as she turned over the papers, she saw two old letters. There were many post-marks upon them. One was in Miss Jerome's handwriting, and six months old; the other was in the handwriting of a stranger. With a careless smile she opened Miss Jerome's old letter, but as she read it through, she started at one paragraph:

"I daresay the report has reached India before now that Captain Trevor is engaged to Miss Gore. It is probable he would write to Colonel St. Barbe, or some of his old friends; and as I only heard of it the

very day I wrote last, I did not like to mention it till I was sure. I have seen them both, and they seem very happy."

"The old fool is mad or dreaming!" she muttered. "It is impossible!" And she hastily took up the other letter.

It was the one from Herbert, and it was so worded as clearly to give the impression that Caryl had been the victim of Charlie and Muriel, that he was like a straw whirled down by a torrent, and that, if he could be saved from a temporary infatuation, it would be the best thing for his future. And Kate acted upon that impression—we must always remember that. Not all to win Caryl from Muriel, but also to save him from misery, as she believed.

She sat there, turned as it were into stone. What could she do? Was it too late? The letters were of such old date, the marriage might have taken place; and yet Miss Jerome's later letters said nothing about it. She would wait one

more post and see, and then, if the final blow had not been struck, start at once for England.

That evening the Stanleys saw her no more. She sent word down that she was tired, and should go at once to rest. Colonel Stanley, on receiving the message, simply said,

"Unpleasant letters from England, I suppose, my love. Well, at all events the system here is an improvement on London posts, even if they do open your letters. There one is never safe—every morning comes that dreadful rat-tat; and not one letter out of twenty is pleasant; and every two hours come rat-tats again. The agony is dispersed over every hour of the day; while here it is concentrated on two or three times a week, and the nervous system has time to recover in between."

"Ungrateful man," answered his wife. "Would you like to have been here in the

days of love-letters? We wrote them once upon a time, you know."

"I am not certain, my love," was the Colonel's reply. "The palpitation of the heart whilst waiting daily for love-letters is most injurious to the constitution. Here there must be an interregnum of two or three days; and I'll make the Papal officials a present of all they could ever understand of my effusions; and if they were so utterly unintelligible as to be referred to the Pope himself, why, he is a sworn bachelor, and ought not to comprehend one word. I daresay he does though —he is a kind-hearted old man, and looks too pleasant not to remember that he too was young once."

Mrs. Stanley was not quite certain whether such language did not border on the profane; but, luckily for her bewilderment, she thought it possible that the worthy old Pope did not understand everything, the English language

included, and therefore the Colonel escaped the lecture he would otherwise have had.

Next morning, when Kate came down, she looked very pale.

"You are ill, my dear," said Mrs. Stanley.

"Not ill—only worried and anxious. I may have to go to England, I cannot tell. I shall wait for one more post."

"Shall I go down to the office?" asked the Colonel. "They often keep letters. I asked an official the other day how it was we got ours so irregularly; he was confidential, and he told me they keep all the bags till they have time to pick out one out of every ten letters, and then they read that; and much good may it do them when they do!"

"No, dear Colonel; I'll wait patiently for twenty-four hours more, and then, if there is no letter, I shall go, unless it brings me the news I dread."

"Nothing very bad, I hope?" said Mrs. Stanley.

"Only a foolish marriage, that is all."

"That is all, is it?" thought the Colonel. "All is all in all to you, my lady, I suspect. It is an old tale, too. Well, it is no business of mine, but if it is a marriage she is resolved to stop, I pity the bride elect."

Two days more, and the post came in, and this time there was a letter from Miss Jerome. It alluded to the approaching marriage, which was to take place in the third week in January. It was now the middle of the month. There was time yet.

"I shall go to England to-morrow," was her announcement to Mrs. Stanley. "I must."

She was so resolved that no opposition could be offered by her friends; and, in the early morning of the next day, Kate and

her maid took their places in the train to Florence.

Colonel Stanley saw them off. He was very much vexed, and grievously puzzled; but, like a wise man, he said nothing, except how glad he and Mrs. Stanley would be to see her again.

"I may come back, or I may not—I do not know. I may be too late. Colonel Stanley, if I do come back, ask me no questions; only believe I shall need all the kindness friends could give, to heal a deep and cruel wound."

The train crawled out of the dilapidated, dirty station, which, at that time, was all that Rome could offer to her thousand visitors. It was evening before Florence was reached; and there, perforce, a halt was made. Another start next morning, and a halt at Turin; then that weary crossing the Alps,—for even the Fell railroad was not made. St. Michel at last, and the fast train through to Paris.

Another halt, for the morning mail to England was gone; yet Kate went down to Calais by a slow train, and gazed with hungry eyes at the sea.

All day she sat on that dreary pier till darkness came on, and the station grew bright with innumerable lights. At last, after weary hours, she went on board the mail-boat, and lay down on a sofa in the cabin. The Paris train came in, the anchor was weighed, and the boat started. A long two hours, while her mental agony fought and conquered the demon of sea-sickness.

The Dover lights at last. Kate was in England; and, in the grey dawn of a January morning, she crawled up the stairs of the Charing Cross Hotel, and sought rest in the room allotted to her. And there, overpowered by fatigue, she fell into a dreamless sleep, all unconscious that, under the same roof, Caryl slept, and dreamed of Muriel.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE COMING STORM.

For ghosts unseen crept in between,
  And when our songs flowed free,
Sang discords in an undertone,
  And marred our harmony.
The past is ours, not yours, they said,
  The waves that beat the shore,
Though like the same are not the same,
  For ever, ever more.

A. F. C. K.

ALL was busy preparation at Ropsley. Muriel's wedding-day approached—it was but one day off. The Captain was resolved that his daughter's wedding should be a memorable event, and a large party had been invited to the breakfast, and a still larger one to the dance in the evening,

given for the special benefit of the bridesmaids.

Charlie was here, there, and everywhere, acting as the Captain's aid-de-camp, and even Herbert had condescended to be one of the bridesmen, secretly wondering all the while why Lady Beauvilliers had never even acknowledged his letter, and why she chose to stay quietly in Italy, and allow the marriage to go on. He put it down at last to the fickleness of women—that Kate had ceased to care for Caryl, and perhaps had found a new object of attraction; and finding his plan a failure, he submitted in sulky disapproval to the inevitable.

Mrs. Evans had actually offered to invite Dr. O'Rourke to perform the marriage ceremony, but Muriel declined with thanks, saying that she had already asked Mr. Vivian, and he had most kindly agreed to do it.

Even the wedding-dress was home, and Muriel looked shyly and fondly at the

glossy folds of the rich satin, and the rare lace that trimmed it.

Caryl had insisted on a wreath of real orange-blossoms, and he was to bring it with him when he arrived the evening preceding the ceremony.

Everything was ready, and now, on the last afternoon, Muriel sat, quiet and thoughtful, in the little boudoir that had been specially her own, and which she was so soon to leave. One of her bridesmaids was with her, a girl much younger than herself, whom she had known from childhood, and they were both busy sealing up and addressing the cards, which were to be sent out far and wide.

"Captain and Mrs. Caryl Trevor," said Nellie Heathcote at last, putting her head on one side, as if to see the writing better. "What a pretty name! Don't you think so, Muriel?"

"Of course I do; but the name is not

of much consequence. Nellie, when your time comes, don't refuse a man you love, because he has an ugly name, as a lady I once knew did."

"I should make him change it. Now-a-days it is so easily done; it does not cost more than a pound or two to advertise in the *Times*. To be sure the old way was the grandest. Herald's College and a coat of arms, all blue and gold, and of course one expected to have to pay for the thing being done in style, but then it was so very expensive."

Muriel laughed.

"Well, Nellie, we'll hope that your *futur* will not be indebted either to Herald's College or the *Times* for his name, and that you will love him very dearly, whatever it may be."

"As much as you love Captain Trevor! That's my idea of true love. I don't believe you could have cared for anyone else."

"Not in the same way, Nellie, never. I am sure of that."

"It was your first love—that makes all the difference!"

"It is my one love. It might not have been the first, but it happened so."

Nellie looked puzzled.

"I don't understand you."

"I mean that there is always one love in a woman's life apart from all others, not always the first or the last, or the wisest and best, but *the* love, *par excellence*, of the life. Many people marry and have not known it, and then, in after-years, they find they have missed something that would have made life very different; and some marry who have known it, and then they feel it is not the same thing, this quiet, every-day affection of theirs, not like what they once felt and knew, but they may be very happy, for all that.

"Some people know nothing about it, Muriel, I am sure of that."

"Very possibly; there are some natures in which it lies dormant for ever—nothing has called it out; but we cannot tell, there is a skeleton in every house, a secret in every life—we only see the shell of most of the lives around us."

"And what would you have done if Captain Trevor had never come back?"

"Gone on living as I was living—enjoying a good deal, and shutting up my skeleton, for private inspection only."

"And if anything were to come in between you now! Oh, Muriel, forgive me! How pale you are! how you shiver!"

"My dear Nellie, it is over, but the bare possibility terrified me. My past few years have been, as it were, clouded by a girl's undying sorrow, but now it would be a woman's agony. I would rather die."

Nellie turned the conversation. Muriel's concentrated depth of feeling frightened her. The Winter evening closed in, and Muriel and her friend went to dress for the

dinner-party which was to welcome Caryl and Mr. Vivian. How often afterwards did Nelly Heathcote remember Muriel as she looked that night. She wore a white muslin dress, closed at the throat by a cameo brooch of exquisite design, the last of Caryl's presents, and in her hair a rich red camelia. Excitement had flushed her cheek and deepened the look of expectation in her eyes, a look that grew more and more eager as the hours wore on. Caryl was to come by the 5.30 train, go to his hotel to dress, and be with her at 6.30 at the latest. It was past six when Mr. Vivian came in; he had arrived by the same train, and Muriel asked him eagerly if he had seen Trevor.

"No," was his answer; "but you forget that I never saw him, and though there were very few passengers, and no one answering to my idea of him, he might so easily escape my notice in that half-lighted station."

Nellie saw the flush on Muriel's cheek fade away, and a strange anxious expression cross her face. Directly afterwards Charlie came in. He went up to Captain Gore, and after shaking hands with him, said in a low voice,

"I went to the train to meet Trevor; he has not come by it, he must have missed it, but why did he not telegraph?"

"Are you sure he is not here?" asked Captain Gore.

"Quite sure; but, if we hear nothing, I'll go down to the eleven o'clock train."

"Muriel," said Captain Gore, "Trevor has evidently missed his train; it is no use to wait for him; he said he was coming by the 5.30, did he not?"

"He said so in his letter this morning." Muriel's voice trembled as she answered. Mr. Vivian, with a look of apology at Mrs. Gore, came up to her, and offered his arm to take her. Dinner was announced, and the party filed off.

"Cheer up, dear child," whispered Mr. Vivian, "twenty things may have delayed Captain Trevor, and driven the telegraph out of his mind."

"I know it," said Muriel, "but I feel as if some great sorrow were at hand."

The dinner passed over but sadly as it seemed; as if by common consent, the subject of the next day was avoided, and, when the ladies had withdrawn, Mr. Vivian asked Charlie what he thought of the delay in the bridegroom's arrival.

"It is incomprehensible," was Charlie's reply. "He wanted me to go with him to London. I wish I had."

"I don't like this," observed Captain Gore. "Things were different when I was young, we were not so careless as the men of the present day. There's a ring at the bell; it's the telegraph."

Charlie started up, and rushed into the hall.

"No," he said when he came back, "only

something for to-morrow—finery, or flowers, or something."

A few minutes passed over, and a disjointed conversation was kept up by Captain Gore, his old friend Mr. Heathcote, Nellie's father, and Mr. Vivian. Suddenly Charlie started up. "He may have telegraphed to me to make his excuses. I'll run home," and off he started.

But no telegram awaited him at home, and Charlie grew fearfully anxious. Nine o'clock, and no news. Then it flashed over him—could Kate be in England?—and turning his steps in a different direction, he ran off to Miss Jerome's.

The old lady had not yet retired to rest, and answered his knock with her usual cautious "Who's there?"

"Charlie Evans," was the answer. "Let me in, Miss Jerome—I must see you."

She opened the door, and gazed in astonishment at his pale face and evening costume.

"My dear Charlie, what has happened? —is Muriel ill?"

"No, but there is something the matter. Trevor has neither come nor telegraphed."

"Good mercy me! and my dress all ready! But what a selfish old fool I am! What can I do?"

"Tell me one thing—have you heard from Kate?—where is she?"

"I had a letter a week ago, dated Rome; but you didn't think—no, you cannot believe it—that, if she were in England, it would make any difference!"

"I don't know what to think."

"Oh! Mr. Charlie—dear Mr. Charlie—think anything but that! And yet, oh me! oh me! what misery all this is, even the suspicion of it! What *would* the reality be?"

Charlie could not answer; his heart was full, and yet Miss Jerome's words had relieved one terrible fear.

"He may be ill," he said at last.

"Or run over in the streets, and taken to an hospital," added Miss Jerome.

"God grant we may hear something to-night," said Charlie, "and that we may all meet in happiness to-morrow. It promises to be a fine day. Good night, Miss Jerome."

He went back, and rang at the bell of Captain Gore's house.

"Any telegrams?" he asked the servant who opened it.

"No, sir, none," was the answer.

He went back into the dining-room, and found the gentlemen still there.

"No news, Captain Gore; but is it possible, as Miss Jerome suggests, that sudden illness——"

"Miss Jerome!" said Captain Gore—"you have seen her, then? Why, what help could she give?"

"None," answered Charlie. "It was only a fancy of mine; she had no news of anyone."

If Captain Gore suspected the reason, he said nothing.

"You have some fear that haunted you, Charlie," said Mr. Vivian, as they went to rejoin the ladies.

Charlie was silent, but he led the way to the dining-room (they had dined in the library), and pointed to the long tables, laid out with the breakfast, the bridal cake occupying its usual post of honour, and even the flowers in their places, ready for the morrow.

"Look there, Mr. Vivian," he said, "I have a presentiment that no bride will enter this room to-morrow. If only he is ill—if that is all, I shall be thankful. Mr. Vivian, I shall go to the late train; if he is not there, on to London, even if I have to go by a special. Promise me that you will stay till I return. There will be another train about four to-morrow morning; that is the last he can come by. Will you, if he does not come, be the one to tell Muriel?"

"I will," said Mr. Vivian. "I will not leave her till the dark hour is over, if it must come."

They went upstairs. Muriel was silent and anxious; every noise made the blood rush to her pale face; but no telegram came. It grew late. Mr. Vivian and Charlie looked at each other.

"My darling," said Captain Gore, "go to bed now. Caryl will not come to-night —that is, if he comes by the next train, it will be too late for him to come here."

"Yes, dear child," added Mr. Vivian, "and be quite sure that you shall be told if he comes."

She rose to obey; it seemed as if she had neither strength nor spirit to refuse, and her mother and Nellie followed her. As soon as she was gone, Charlie rose and said it was time to go to the train. Captain Gore said he should go with him, Mr. Vivian and Mr. Heathcote remaining with the ladies.

They started, and reached the station. The platform was but half-lighted, and, as they walked up and down, ill-defined fears filled both their minds.

It seemed hours before the shrill whistle and the distant moving red lights heralded the in-coming train; it ran slowly into the station; a couple of half-sleepy porters threw open the doors. An old man in furs got out; a young woman in black with a bundle, two commercial travellers, and three or four second-class passengers —that was all. No sign of Caryl Trevor.

"He has fallen asleep in one of the carriages," said Charlie; and taking the lamp from the porter, he searched every compartment, but no Caryl Trevor was there.

The guard came up; like everyone else he knew what was going on, and he had often seen Trevor.

"You are looking for Captain Trevor, Mr. Evans," he said, in a low tone; "well, he bain't here, but I seed him this arter-

noon, at five o'clock. I went over to Charing-Cross to see an old mate of mine, and, as I was a-walking on the platform, I see Captain Trevor come out, and heerd him ask what time the next Dover train started —'twas my mate as he asked. 'Six o'clock, sir,' says Jim. Well, I should have thought nowt of that, but I seed a lady in deep mourning a-standing close by, and I heerd her say to the Captain, 'That will do, Caryl,' says she, a-using of his Christening name; and I looked her full in the face. I knew her again, even in her widdie's weeds, sir. If you believe me, it was my Lady Beauvilliers."

"My God!" was all that Charlie could say, and Captain Gore reeled back against the wall like a drunken man.

"I'll go to London," whispered Charlie, hoarsely. "I must take a special train."

The guard, like a kind-hearted fellow, at once saw the case.

"You're in the rights of it, sir," he said.

"Look here, there's a fish-train now a-going up. She'll be in London by four o'clock. Will you go with my mate, the guard, in his van? I'll settle it all?"

"God bless you, Charlie," said poor Captain Gore, "and you too, my good fellow! Yes, Charlie, it will be best that you should go. I fear the worst, and my place is near my darling Muriel."

"I'll telegraph the instant the office is open, whether I know anything or not."

"This way, sir!" cried the guard; "she is now starting from the siding. It's all right. You can go with Ned Porter; don't forget my mate's name at Charing Cross—it's Morris. He'll be on night duty there. You ask for him; tell him you want to find the gent who spoke to him about the Dover train. He'll remember, for I said he ought to be a-going to his bride, and what could he be arter? This way, sir; here you are!"

In a few moments more the train rushed out into the dark starless night, and

Charlie was on his way to trace out a darker deed.

Captain Gore went back. Mr. Vivian met him at the door.

"No news," he said sadly.

Mr. Vivian went up-upstairs, and knocked at the door of Muriel's boudoir. She was sitting there very pale, but calm.

"No news yet," he said cheerfully; "perhaps he'll come by the first train in the morning. Trust and hope, and try to sleep."

Muriel smiled slightly.

"I am very glad you are here," she said; and Mr. Vivian went downstairs saddened and depressed.

The gentlemen sat together; they could not separate; and at four o'clock they went to the train. Muriel had gone to lie down, and Mrs. Vivian and Nellie were watching in the boudoir; but when it was time for Captain Gore and his friends to return, they went to the library, that they might hear them, so that there might be no need to ring the

bell, for Muriel had dropped into a sleep from fatigue and excitement. Presently they came, and Nellie rushed to the door.

"No news," said Mr. Vivian. "We must wait for the telegraph. Do not waken her, poor child. God grant we may know something ere long!"

And what had been doing at Charing Cross that day? A cruel wrong had been wrought by a merciless woman and a weak man.

CHAPTER XIV.

TREASON.

"'Tis not the heaviest grief for which we wear the willow.
The tears bring slow relief, which only wet the pillow.
Hard may be burdens borne, though friends would fain unbind them;
Harder are crosses worn, where only Christ may find them."

CARYL had risen early to breakfast—all was ready—he had the ring safe in his waistcoat pocket—he had only to call in Covent Garden, on his way to the train, for the orange-wreath. Yet, strange as it may seem, so near the marriage-day, and after a six months' engagement, the thought of Kate was uppermost that morning, and of what she would say. "I sup-

pose she does not care a straw one way or the other." And the young man's vanity was hurt.

In this mood he strolled out into the hall, to see after his luggage, and settle his bill; and as he did so, a lady crossed it, asking a porter whom she passed, "if they had a telegraph-office in the house?"

Caryl started—was he dreaming? No, it was Kate, Kate herself, and forgetting all but his joy at seeing her again, he sprang forward to greet her; and it was only when her rapturous cry, "Oh! Caryl, is it you at last?" recalled him to himself, that he remembered his errand of that day.

"Come this way," she said hastily; and he followed her up one broad flight of stairs, into a room on the first floor, where the table was laid for her solitary breakfast. Once there, she turned her beaming face towards him. "How fortunate!" she said—"what a happy meet-

ing!" And then remembrance came back to her too, and she drew her hands from out of his, for he had taken and was holding them. "But perhaps I have no right —you are married?"

"No!" broke out Caryl—"Heaven help me, not yet; but it is too late to draw back, even if I wished it. Why did you not write?"

"I waited for you to do so. I never heard of your engagement till last week, and I came directly. It is *not* too late! Caryl, my Caryl, mine in the sight of Heaven! you cannot, you shall not, you dare not break your oath! 'Come when you will, send when you will, you shall find me ready.' Caryl, I have come, and I claim you in the face of everything!"

Caryl groaned.

"It is too late—I should be disgraced for ever—I should break Muriel's heart!"

"Would you put disgrace in the balance

with a life of love with me? What disgrace could there be? The world at large will care little that you broke with an obscure country girl, even on the eve of the marriage, to fulfil an old promise. You dare not perjure yourself. Muriel Gore! Ask Charlie Evans how she and he concocted that precious plan to trap you into a declaration. Answer me, darling—I will call you so—did not Charlie urge you to propose?"

"He did—it is quite true."

"And he knew you loved me all the time?"

"Yes—I told him so."

"Then the blame be on his head! Muriel will have no broken heart—she will look out for another victim."

"Hush, Kate! Not even from you will I hear a word against Muriel."

"Forgive me, Caryl, my own. I am stung to bitterness by the thought of losing you!" And she burst into real

tears of passionate sorrow, and laid her head upon his breast.

Caryl felt bewildered, yet he could not resist the impulse to kiss the lips so near his own—there was no sin in it now, he thought—the very touch fired his blood, and made his heart beat fast; and he strained her to his bosom in a close clasp, that would not loose its hold.

"I cannot leave you, my love, my darling!" he said. "It matters not what comes. And yet what can I, what shall I do?" And he told her how even now he ought to be on his way to the train.

"Write and tell her I have returned to claim you; she will receive it before the hour appointed."

"But all this evening she will wonder and wait. My poor, faithful Muriel!"

"Has she wondered more than I have? Has she waited longer than I have done? Caryl, if you go to her I go too, and I will tell all the world how in India we loved

each other, and why we parted, and that you love me still; and I will dare her to take you from me, my own, my own!" And she flung her arms around him. "I will not be parted from you!"

The hours passed on. All Caryl's deepest, most passionate feelings were aroused; and so were Kate's, and she used every art to tempt him and bind him to herself.

What could a weak man do in the hands of such a woman? He yielded, and Kate triumphed. A few hurried lines he wrote and left to be posted:

"Muriel, forgive me and forget me, if you can. We never shall meet again. Say what you like of me—think what you like of me; you cannot blame me too much. May God bless you!—CARYL."

And that was all his farewell!

It was late before either of these erring lovers thought of inquiring how soon a train would take them to Dover, *en route* to Paris. It was better to go away at once

from London; and it was then that the Ropsley guard saw them.

He did not know either of them sufficiently, or he would have noticed how flushed was Kate with excitement and victory, how pale was Caryl with a thousand contending feelings—pity for Muriel, strange wild joy that Kate was his at last, and intense, reckless love, such as he had never given to Muriel.

They went to Dover, from thence to Paris; and the dawn of Caryl's wedding-morning saw him placing Kate in a *fiacre*, on their way to a quiet hotel. There let us leave them. Be sure that, sooner or later, the fate of all who are weak, and cowardly, and traitorous, and cruel shall overtake them; for the evil angel of Caryl's life has triumphed, and his foot is on the downward course that leads to misery untold.

And that same faint dawn lighted Charlie to London. A cab drove him

straight over to Charing Cross Station. All was dark and silent—no train was expected for an hour or more; but by tipping sundry officials, and asking for the night-porter, Morris, he effected an entrance, and found that individual reposing among the lamps in a very dirty room. He started up, half surly at the interruption; but Charlie in a few words explained his errand. Morris's sympathies were all aroused.

"That 'ere party in widdie's weeds a-running off with another gal's bridegroom—or, at least, you think so? Well, I think as how you are not far off the truth. I seed her go by the six o'clock train, with the military gent and the lady's maid, and their luggage was labelled 'Paris,' all on it; and there was trunks as never belonged to a lady among it. But their names I can't swear to. I'll tell ye what, though—as you must know all directly, for that poor gal's sake—you come along of me. I can

get into the hotel, and we'll wake up 'boots,' and he shall show us the book with names in it."

Charlie caught at the idea—this would confirm all, and, following the porter, they entered the hotel by a small door, through various passages, till Charlie found himself in the hall, while Morris woke up "boots." That official arrived, half awake, but wholly alert at the prospect of a handsome tip, and, plunging into the glass case, where the hall-porter held his state during the day, soon produced the books, and by the light of the porter's lamp Charlie searched the pages. Yes, there was the name of "Captain Caryl Trevor," and a page or two lower (she had arrived two days later) that of "Lady Beauvilliers," and against both was the word "left," and the same date to both, that of the preceding evening. He closed the book, with a feeling of faintness at his heart, and, amply rewarding his friends, walked

out into the cold morning air, and pondered how to frame the words of his telegram.

He walked up and down. The Central Telegraph Office was open, but it was no use, because that at Ropsley was closed till six. Just as the bell of St. Martin's rang out that hour, answered in deep tones by Big Ben of Westminster, he entered and asked a clerk to try if Ropsley was open. In a few minutes the answer came, "*Yes, and three gentlemen waiting for a message.*" It was sent at once.

"*All over. He is gone to Paris, and not alone. I return at once. Do nothing till I come, but put off the guests.*"

Captain Gore and his friends were indeed waiting in the little telegraph office. It was hardly opened before the message from London was flashed along the wires.

"Charlie is there—I am sure of it," said Mr. Vivian. "Our suspense will be over now."

A few moments more and it was, and

they looked at each other in blank dismay. Mr. Heathcote broke the silence.

"Rascal!—villain!" he said; "and the woman is worse. It is that devilish Kate Kennedy, you may be sure."

"As there is a heaven above us, he shall be punished!" answered Captain Gore, "if I hunt him through the world."

Mr. Vivian said nothing; but a silent prayer went up for the one so cruelly wronged, and for wisdom to aid and strengthen her. He thought it better to let the storm of natural indignation work itself out. He was far too sensible to try to stem it by the hackneyed quotation, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." He had no shadow of doubt but that the God of truth and justice would repay—ay, and tenfold—this bitter treason; but he knew it was no time for Scripture texts just then.

"What shall we do?" said Mr. Heathcote.

"I would suggest," answered Mr.

Vivian, "that, as you know everyone of the invited guests, you go round, see the heads of the families, and say that unexpected difficulties have arisen at the last moment, and that the marriage is postponed. We can send to countermand the carriages, and I will go myself to see the Rector, who so kindly gave me up his place. Captain Gore, let her mother simply tell her that Trevor was obliged to leave London in haste—that Charlie will be here with the full particulars soon, and then leave me to break the whole truth. You are not calm enough—and no wonder, it is a cruel wrong, and I would have given ten years of my life, all its best that is left now, if I could have spared that poor girl this trial."

The advice was kind and wise, and Captain Gore wrung the clergyman's hand in silence. As a rule, he disliked parsons, as he called them, but here was one he could trust and respect. And so it was done.

It was a relief to Captain Gore to find Muriel sleeping still, and when Mr. Vivian returned at half-past seven she was but just awaking. Nellie Heathcote was sitting in the room, tears staining her merry face; she had heard the news, and turned away, as she heard Muriel stir.

"Nellie," said a sad voice, "don't turn away. I know all. You would have woke me long ago, if there had been any good news—but there is none."

"None," said Nellie. She dare not say more.

"Leave me for a little while, dear, I shall get up and dress, not in my——" and she stopped,

"Yes, do," said Nellie, half-choking, "and then Mr. Vivian will tell you," and she burst into a fit of tears.

Muriel was not long dressing; she threw her hair into a net, and wrapped herself up in her dressing-gown; her maid assisted in silence, and when her young mistress

was dressed and ready in the boudoir, left to fetch her some hot coffee.

"Tell my mother to come," said Muriel, but at that moment Mrs. Gore entered.

"My darling, my Muriel, it is so hard, so cruel!"

"Let me know all."

"My child, we know nothing but that Captain Trevor is gone to Paris."

"Alone?"

Mrs. Gore shook her head, and was silent.

"Is Mr. Vivian here?—ask him to come and tell me."

Mrs. Gore turned away to summon Mr. Vivian, and he must have been very close, for he came in directly, and took the seat by Muriel's side. At a sign from him, Mrs. Gore left them. Even Mr. Vivian was puzzled how to begin.

"Before I tell you anything (and there is little to tell), take some bread and coffee. You will, I know, to oblige me," and he

poured some out and handed it to her. She took a few spoonfuls mechanically. "There's a good child; now I will not keep you in suspense. Captain Trevor went to Paris yesterday."

"And not alone?—they will not tell me."

"Not alone; he has been tempted to do a great wrong by a wicked woman."

"Kate?"

"We believe so, we do not know."

"I am sure of it."

"Charlie will be back at noon. We shall know all then."

"And you will tell me all?"

Her strange quietness startled Mr. Vivian.

"You shall—you have the right to know all."

"Where is my father?"

"Downstairs, fearfully angry and excited of course; do you wish to see him?

He thought it better that I should tell you."

"Much better; no, I don't wish to see anyone yet. It is all arranged—everybody put off?"

"All and everybody. You have only to try to bear this as well as you can. It is very, very hard—I know it."

Muriel set her teeth together, she would not give way.

"Only don't let them hurt him," she said, "that would be worse than all; you will prevent that?"

"Oh! marvellous strength of woman's love!" thought Mr. Vivian; "he is first, after all!"

"No, dear child," he said aloud; "thank God, the heathenish custom of duelling is out of fashion, and, besides, he is far away; we don't know where—Paris is the road to all the continent."

"But I don't mean that, I mean not to

hurt his name or his honour, or do anything but forget. I forgive him—indeed I do; tell them so."

Tears sprang to Mr. Vivian's eyes.

"I will tell them," he said. "May I tell them too, Muriel, that you will try to bear this patiently? They are wounded deeply for you, do not make them suffer more in seeing your pain than you can help. My child, you went in your gladness and gave it into God's holy keeping. He only knows why and how this has come to pass, and there is only one place for your sorrow, and that is at the foot of the Cross."

"I will try," she said simply, "but I feel ill and stupid. I think I will go and lie down, but don't tell any one I am ill—I am too proud for that."

Mr. Vivian was fairly unmanned; he took her hand, and kneeling by her side, poured out an impassioned prayer, in which he committed her to the keeping of Him who

could feel for every human sorrow; and prayed, too, that the man who through weakness had been led into sin, might be forgiven, and the woman who had tempted him brought to repentance. When he had ended, Muriel looked at him sadly, no light in her eyes, no quiver on her lips—she seemed frozen.

"I do trust in you," she said; "you will arrange for me—I will try to sleep now, I am so tired."

"God do so, and more to me, if ever I betray that trust!" cried Mr. Vivian as he rose to ring for her attendant. "I will guard your pride and his life, and I will not leave Ropsley while I can serve you."

So Muriel was left in solitude, too stunned for tears—the agony was yet to come—and she even slept at intervals, always quiet and silent; while fierce passions raged down below, where the old Captain swore vengeance against the man who had wronged his child.

Noon came at last, and with it Charlie; and the little he had to tell was soon told. It was conclusive; Caryl was beyond the reach of punishment, and Mr. Vivian pleaded that to disgrace him openly was only to involve Muriel in a most undesirable publicity.

"We cannot help Ropsley talk," he said, "but surely you do not want her name bandied about every club in London? Our task now must be to help her to bear, and her own wishes deserve consideration."

Mr. Heathcote agreed in this. If it had been possible then and there to flog Caryl Trevor and Kate Beauvilliers round Ropsley market-place, that worthy old gentleman could have willingly done it; but it could not be, and to quiet down gossip and scandal was the best course now.

Besides, "jilting" a girl is unfortunately not a social crime, and as the young man had banished himself, there was a public end of the matter. At last the Captain listened to

reason, and consented to lay aside his plans of revenge. Mr. Vivian and Heathcote went out to brave the Ropsley world, and see what it said.

And Ropsley did talk that day! The wildest reports got about, but no one blamed Muriel, and it was not clearly made out that Lady Beauvilliers had anything to do with it. The general opinion was that the settlements had gone all wrong, that Trevor was bankrupt and had run away; and the gentlemen did not contradict it—only, when Mr. Vivian met Herbert, and saw his sneer of triumph, as he said, "I told you so—I never believed Trevor would come to the scratch," his very blood boiled as he answered, "What you *believe* has very little to do in the matter, Mr. Evans; what you *did* is another question," and then turned away.

Letters came that evening. Caryl's, given to a waiter, and of course carelessly forgot-

ten to be posted till too late, and a few lines from Kate to Miss Jerome, who was utterly overwhelmed by their import, and trotted up to the Gores' house in a state of despair. All but Muriel were assembled at dinner—such a mockery of dinner in the library. Charlie was there too, when Miss Jerome was announced.

"Have you heard from that wretch, Captain Gore? Of course you have. Here's a letter from Lady Beauvilliers, I'll never call her Kate again, she's a disgrace to me; but, indeed, indeed, I never taught her to do such wicked things!"

Poor Captain Gore smiled faintly, and Charlie took the letter. "Sit down, dear Miss Jerome," he said; "may we read it?"

"Of course! of course! Read it out, a heartless baggage, as she is!"

Charlie read. The words were few, but enough:

"DEAREST JERRIE,

"When you get this I shall be on my way to Paris, or, I hope, arrived there. Captain Trevor goes with me. We shall be married directly, but I shall retain my name. We go on to Nice and Florence after the ceremony; address to me at either place *poste-restante*. Muriel ought to be very grateful to me for taking Captain Trevor off her hands; she never could have made him happy. I expect you to congratulate me. You guessed, I conclude, from what I said to you, and his leaving India, that something had passed there which rendered this step probable. I arrived only just in time. Thank Herbert for his letter—it put me *au courant* of the whole affair.

"Ever yours, affectionately,

"KATE BEAUVILLIERS."

"Herbert!" said Captain Gore; "then he has had a hand in this plot?"

"I was sure of it," said Charlie, sternly. "Leave him to me. We do not know what was said, and there was nothing in the mere fact of his writing to her that we can notice."

Miss Jerome wept bitterly; no one could console her, and Mrs. Gore led her from the room in the deepest affliction. That evening Muriel seemed worse. Nellie said,

"She was so dreadfully quiet and stupid, she did not seem to care, and yet anyone must know she did."

She saw Charlie, and thanked him for all his unfailing kindness, and he "went out and wept bitterly."

Only Mr. Vivian saw him.

"You think her very ill, Charlie?"

"In body, no; in mind, yes. Her heart is broken."

"That is a wide phrase. In what special way do you mean?"

"That she is utterly crushed. She will live on, loving him to the last; but trust,

and faith, and hope are gone for ever."

"Poor child! poor child!" said Mr. Vivian. "No earthly help can avail her now. Charlie, we must pray for her."

"I would have died to spare her this! You know it, Mr. Vivian."

"I do. God will reward you; but if you would help her, be silent, even to Herbert."

"Rascal!" muttered Charlie. "I may be silent, but I shall not forget. Mr. Vivian, I shall leave Ropsley. I cannot live on in the same house with him."

"I think you are right. It would be a perpetual state of bitterness and irritation. Come to me to-morrow. I will consider what can be done, and I may be able to help you."

"You won't leave her yet?"

"No, nor her father. The gallant old fellow would hunt Trevor down even now, but he must be kept quiet. Heathcote and I will try to calm him. And now good

night, dear Charlie. Come early to-morrow, and we will talk affairs over."

The dark, silent night closed in, and Muriel was utterly alone. The stern self-control, no longer needed, gave way, and she sobbed in agony, and called on Caryl, her Caryl, hungering and thirsting to see him, if only for one last farewell. Then came in the bitter pang of wounded pride, and she shrunk, as if in physical pain, from the thought of facing the world again; and then a pang more cruel still, as she thought of Kate, with Caryl by her side, and she clasped that last short letter close to her heart, and prayed to die and be at rest; and then again came one fierce thrill of joy, not Mrs. Caryl Trevor! No, Kate would be Lady Beauvilliers still, she would not bear his name!

She tried not to think, not to remember —all in vain; but, above all the storm of pain, rose the thought, half defined, half unconscious, but still there, "Mine in

Eternity, if not here! Mine by right of love and sorrow. Caryl, my Caryl, if I could but see you to say good-bye—to tell you how I love you, how I forgive you!"

The long night wore on, and morning found her weak and exhausted. Many days she remained so, indifferent to all that passed, quiet and silent, yet the physician said there was no danger; and Mr. Vivian stayed on, for he found that his presence and his words had a power to soothe that no one else possessed.

At last she said she was better and should go out, and then Mr. Vivian left. He had urged her in vain to go to his wife in London. She would not go away, she would brave all the world at Ropsley. She did, and, like all nine days' wonders, the talk died out, and Muriel lived on as before; but all the light was gone from her life—hope had utterly died out. She had been raised to the height of heaven, to be dashed down to the depths of hell, and she looked

on the world as one long scene of sorrow and trial, the sooner over the better.

The Summer of Muriel's life was ended, and the Autumn had set in, with its brilliant hues on leaf and flower, yet with its wild winds, its shortening days, and its pale grey sky. Her first sorrow had left her a loving woman; her second was to leave her in some ways a stern cynic; but a third was to come, still fiercer, if that were possible, than these which had gone before; and what that left her, we shall see, when we raise the curtain once more, ten years later, on the life of Muriel Gore.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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